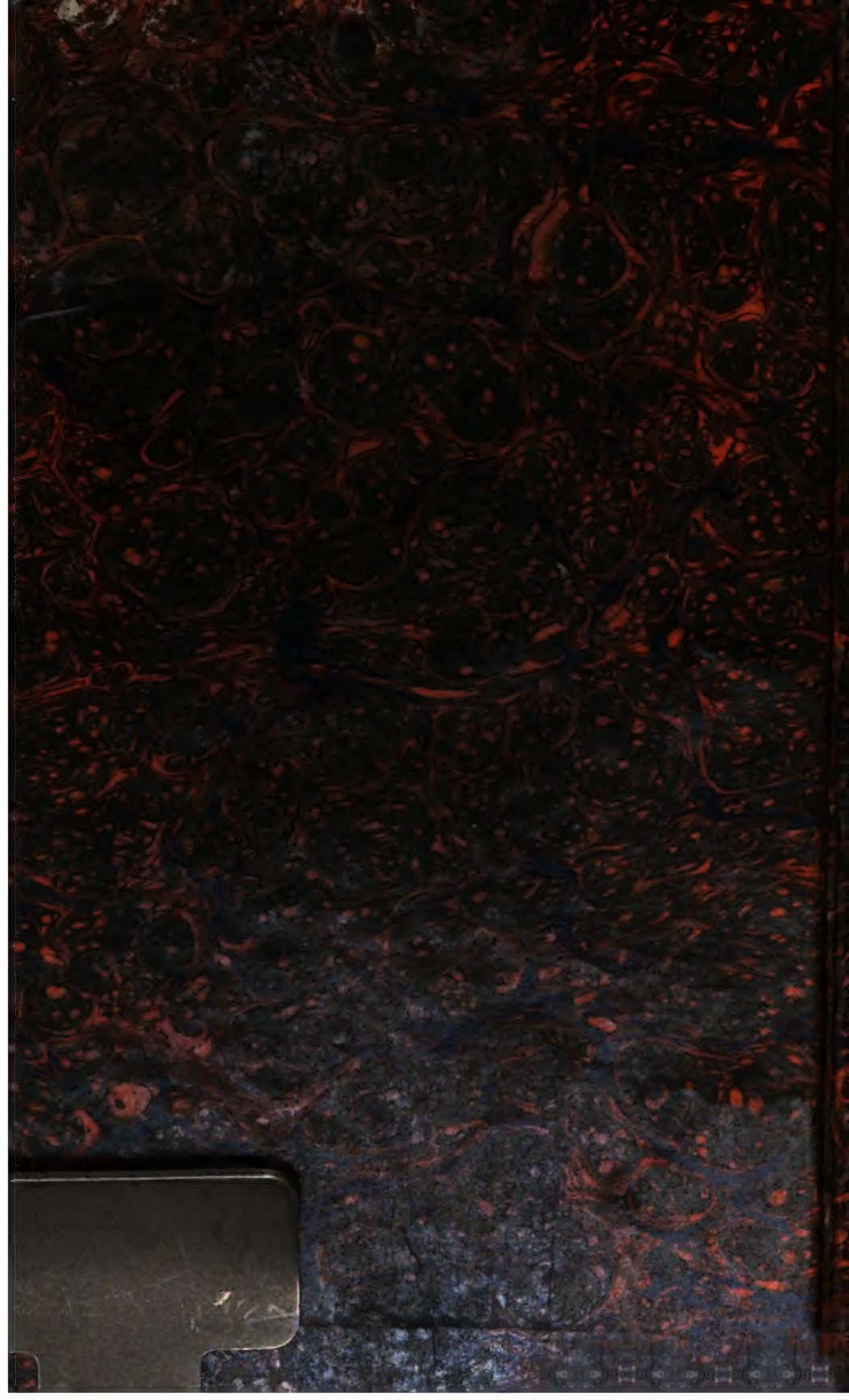
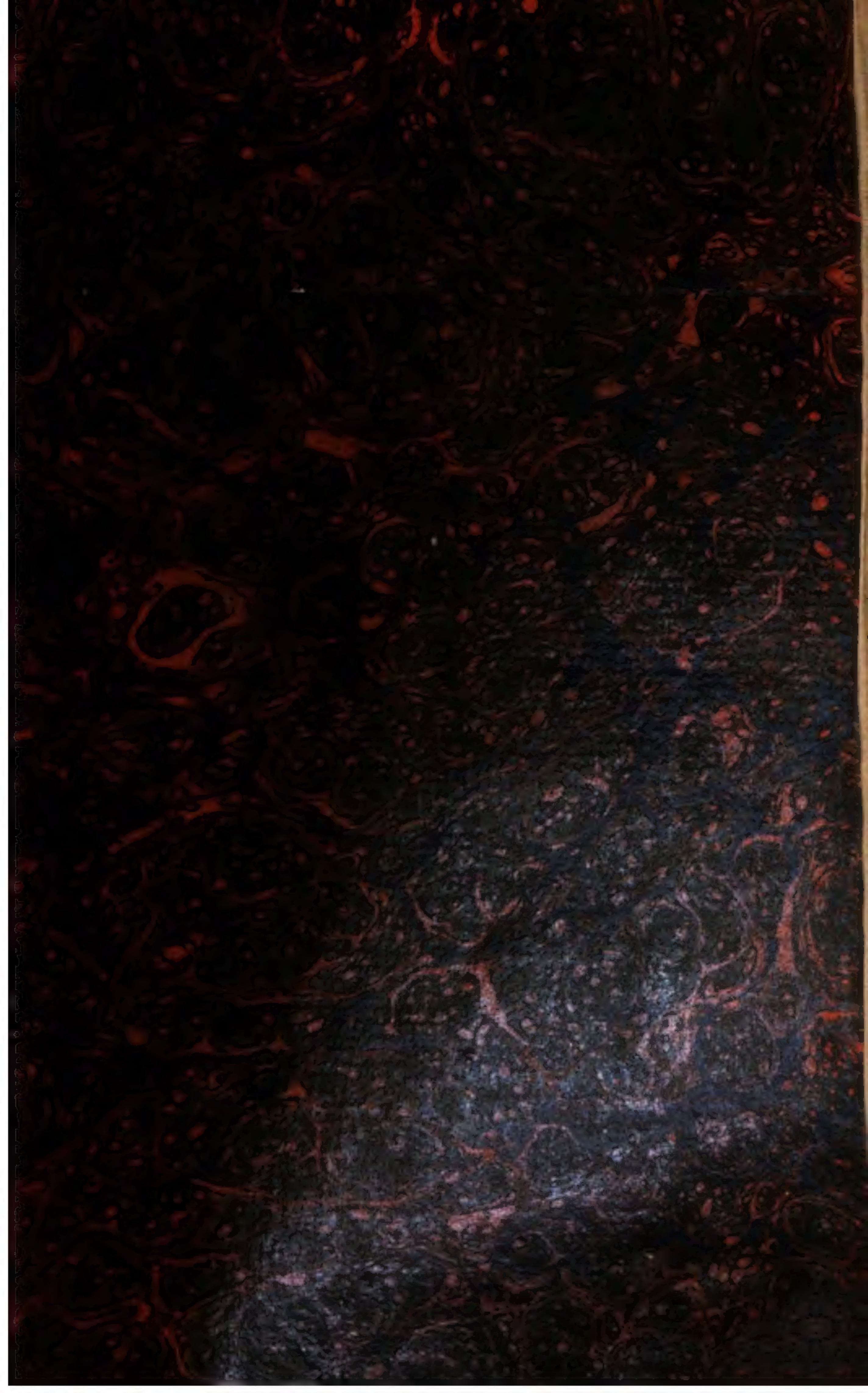








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CHRONOLOGICAL

VOYAGES AND TRAVELS

FRAGMENTS
OF
VOYAGES AND TRAVELS.

WILLIAM

OR

VOYAGES & TRAVELS

IN

THE EAST INDIES

AND THE

WEST INDIES

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VOYAGES AND TRAVELS

FRAGMENTS
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BY
CAPT^N BASIL HALL, R.N.
THIRD SERIES
VOL. III.



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R. SEAR, SC.

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ERRATUM VOL. III.

Page 276, line 5 (in a part of the impression), *for* "50 $\frac{3}{4}$," read
"49 $\frac{3}{4}$."

FRAGMENTS
OF
VOYAGES AND TRAVELS.

Third Series.

CHAPTER I.

COMMISSIONING A SHIP.

It was originally my intention, in this concluding volume of Fragments, to have called the attention of my young friends in the naval service to several points connected with their profession, which I had reason to believe might prove useful to them. It was my wish, in the first place, to have taken a general survey of the nature and practice of our system of discipline, and to shew the relative duties of all classes of officers and men. I thought also of throwing out a few general hints on

the subject of officer-like and gentleman-like conduct, and in particular of debt and duelling — two rocks upon which many young men split, more, I am persuaded, for want of due instruction than from any deficiency either of principle or of spirit. I then wished to add some words on the most appropriate courses of study, professional, scientific, and literary, which, without interfering too much with their severer and more indispensable occupations as naval men, might be most conducive to the improvement of the rising generation of officers.

These topics, however, and several others, soon swelled so greatly under my hand, that I felt it necessary to curtail the original scheme, and now, instead of embracing the whole field, I propose (in the humble capacity of interpreter,) to select only such parts of this copious subject as seem capable of being rendered intelligible to persons not immediately connected with the sea, and yet may prove more or less useful to those who intend making the navy their profession.

Most people are curious to know how,

from a state of total inaction, or what is called 'laid up in ordinary,' a ship is brought forward into real service. I have therefore thought it right to 'begin with the beginning,' and tell how a man-of-war is first commissioned. This leads on to the interesting topic of fitting-out; that is, getting in the masts, putting the rigging over head, stowing the holds, and so on. The next obvious point to be considered in the equipment of a ship is, the force she is to carry, which naturally brings us to the very curious question of naval gunnery. A ship, however, may easily be commissioned, fitted, provisioned, and armed, by parties of riggers, or by men from other ships, without having any regular crew; but it is impossible she can go to sea, or perform any of the varied and arduous services required of a vessel of war, unless she be properly manned, and the people on board be subjected to good discipline. This necessity involves two of the most important considerations which it is the duty of naval men to attend to, I mean impressment, and the improvements in the naval system by which, perhaps, that prac-

tice may in time be in a great measure disused. Finally, if we suppose a ship equipped, armed, manned, and disciplined, it becomes a curious problem to determine in what manner she may be most expeditiously and safely conducted from place to place over the trackless sea, in the darkest nights, and in all weathers. This branch of the subject carries with it no trivial degree of interest, from the intimate connexion between navigation and astronomy, and from its being one of the most direct and useful applications of the truths of that sublime science to the daily business of life.

In the following chapters I propose to touch consecutively on each of these topics; but without seeking to exhaust any one of them, I shall endeavour to place them in a popular light, or, at all events, to render them intelligible to those who, from patriotism or from mere curiosity, are already disposed to take an interest in such matters. For the rest, I shall be well pleased if any of my young naval friends can pick up a stray hint here and there, which may help to keep them out of

scrapes, or enable them to do their duty to their country, to the service, and to themselves, with less chance of error and remorse than if they were to act by mere rule of thumb, and heedlessly to suppose that any real excellence can be attained without much hard labour and patient thought.

As soon as an officer receives official intimation that he is appointed to the command of a ship, he proceeds either to the Admiralty or to the dock-yard at the port where the ship may happen to be laid up in ordinary, and takes up his commission. In the first place, however, he must wait upon the admiral commanding at the out-port where the ship is lying, and having reported himself, he proceeds to the admiral-superintendent of the dock-yard, to whom he communicates his having received orders to commission such and such a ship. I may here mention, that, since the Navy-Office has been incorporated with the Admiralty, the admiral-superintendent has taken the place of the commissioner of the dock-yard, within the

walls of which it is understood that he has the exclusive charge and responsibility. He has likewise the care of the ships in ordinary, of all the moorings, and generally of all the vessels, and every description of stores in the naval arsenal. An account of the commissioner's duties, which have now devolved upon the admiral-superintendent, would furnish a most interesting and useful insight into our naval economy; but the topic is one of great extent and complexity, and if treated at all, must be treated separately.

In the mean time, I must proceed to put my ship in commission. The first thing to do is to get hold of one of the warrant-officers to 'hoist the pendant,' which is a long slender streamer, having a St. George's cross on a white field in the upper part next the mast, with a fly or tail, either Red, White, and Blue, or entirely of the colour of the particular ensign worn by the ship; which, again, is determined by the colour of the admiral's flag under whose orders she is placed. The pendant being hoisted shews that the ship is in commission, and this part of the

colours is never hauled down day or night. At sunset, when the ensign is hauled down, a smaller pendant, three or four yards in length, is substituted for the long one, which, in dandified ships, waves far over the stern. Ships in ordinary hoist merely an ensign. The boatswain, gunner, and carpenter, who are called the warrant-officers, always remain on board, even when the rest of the officers and crew are paid off, and the ship laid up in ordinary. These valuable personages, under the general superintendence of the captain of the ordinary, an old officer of rank, and assisted by a few lads to row them to and from the shore, keep the ships clean, and guard against fire and pillage, to which they might otherwise be exposed at their moorings in the different creeks and lakes, as they are called, which constitute the harbour.

The next step, after the ship is commissioned, is to open a muster-book. The requisite blank books and other papers will be supplied to the captain by the superintendent of the dock-yard, in order that the names of the officers and men

may be entered as they gradually assemble. The admiral being then informed that the ship is in commission, he orders the commandant of marines to embark the proper complement of men from the barracks.

The master-attendant, in the mean time, has been applied to for a receiving-ship or hulk, alongside of which the ship may be placed, and in which the crew may live while she is fitting out. The same officer will likewise give the boatswain a 'note' for one or more of what are called harbour-boats—strong affairs, not very handsome, but good enough to perform the rough sort of work required in fitting out, which would sadly destroy the ship's regular boats. The boatswain's demand for scrapers, buckets, and junk for swabs, should be made out and approved, that, from the first moment to the last, the hulk may be kept clean.

This word hulk suggests rather unpleasant images to the mind of a person who knows the term only through the medium of police reports, the Newgate Calendar, and other elegant works of a similar stamp. But to naval men it will recall many

days and evenings of jollity and fine fun, when, after long and wearisome cruising, voyaging, and knocking about in foreign parts, the ship being ordered to refit, sails into an English harbour, and warps alongside of some 'old beast of a hulk,' as she is, rather playfully than contemptuously, styled. But, in sooth, it must be owned, that the epithet is not ill bestowed ; for it would seem as if human ingenuity had, in this instance, been racked to devise methods by which one of the prettiest and most graceful of objects could be degraded into the most unsightly of floating bodies. A ship in full trim, well painted, with her yards square, and ropes all tight and trig, swims on the water truly like a thing of life ; and as far as taste, symmetry, and comfort are concerned, she is a fit abode for an angel, as the Jacks used to say of their beautiful frigate *La Pique*. On the other hand, when converted into a receiving hulk, the same celestial mansion is degraded into a domicile, as far as appearances go, for any demon.

We all know what resolute men can accomplish when they set about a thing

in earnest ; but it requires a trip to Portsmouth to be able to understand how far the force of art can go in degrading a ship's fair looks. I need not mention that the masts and bowsprit are drawn out of a ship which is to be converted into a hulk ; but no stranger could guess what is the purpose of the curious erections which are substituted, and look for all the world like gibbets. Sometimes, by accident, the bar is carried across the upright pole of one of these machines, and then, though less like a gallows, it offends the eye still more, by its ghostlike resemblance to a crucifix—but how unlike to those glorious emblems on the skyline of cathedrals, or way-sides of Catholic countries, filling the imagination with thoughts at once sublime and holy!

“What can be the object of all those ugly-looking things?” is a question I have frequently heard asked.

“To hang up the warrant officers' clothes upon,” is the reply—though some people might think it still more appropriate if the word clothes were left out, and the aiders and abettors of such ugly inventions tucked up bodily instead.

The hatchet of the backwoodsman is not more ruthless than the destroying axe of the dock-yard maty (the cant word for all the artificers employed in that department), when stripping a ship, as he well calls it, to convert her into a hulk. Away go the quarter galleries and quarter badges—off are torn the wreaths of flowers, and all the tasteful fretwork, together with the stars, crowns, and garters, which adorned the stern, in graceful keeping with the ornamental and useful painting of the ship's side. And here let me protest against a distinction which is sometimes too rigidly made, afloat as well as on land, between what is ornamental and what is useful—implying, forsooth, that ornament is not of use. As if the gratification of good taste were not at least as desirable as the gratification of any other sense. We require the concord of sweet sounds in order to please the ear; and the man who has an atom of music in his soul counts it as so much clear gain to hear a good tune well played. Nor can I see why it should be considered less a matter of actual profit to please the sense of sight by the judicious

disposal of graceful forms, and by the superaddition of what is vulgarly called "mere ornament" to the simply useful parts of our ships or houses. I seriously consider that, in men-of-war especially, it becomes a most important part (I was going to call it, of the discipline, but certainly) of the general efficiency of the vessel, that her looks should not be neglected. I remember seeing a large and fine frigate lying at Spithead, so black and dirty-looking, and so totally without those ornaments in carved work and painting to which all seamen's eyes have become accustomed, that even professional men took her for a convict ship—her own officers became ashamed of her—the crew deserted, and no fresh hands would enter for such "a beastly-looking tub." A few pounds' worth of paint, and a little encouragement to the carpenter, by a commander who knew the real utility of ornament, might, in the course of a week, have rendered her the most popular ship in the fleet.

On the same principle it would, I think, be practically useful to render these re-

ceiving hulks less disgusting objects to look at; and I am glad to find that such an idea is getting afloat in the proper quarter. For it is in vain to hope that the men will take any pride in keeping the inside of their hulk in the proper state of order and cleanliness when her external appearance is so hideous. Not a trace of ornament is left—every thing is shaved away to the very timbers—head and stern are made alike abrupt and dumpy—the ports are converted into windows barred like those of a jail—a clumsy accommodation ladder, as it is called, sticks out on one side, while four enormous chains, with links through which Harlequin could leap, hang from the bows and quarters, tying the poor hulk by the neck and heels. This may be necessary, as there may not be room to swing; but why not paint the ships as of old? Why daub them all over, from end to end, with one mass of black? And why build upon them all sorts of ugly hurricane houses, or rig out strange-looking cranes of different shapes and sizes, too often implying, by the negligence in their appearance, any thing but

good order or sound economy within? I am quite sure that, with a very little trouble, and at no great cost, all these hulks might be made not only respectable-looking, but really handsome objects. The saving would likewise be considerable in the long run; for the people would take much better care of vessels which seemed worth taking care of, than of those which the owners appeared to consider worthless. Besides which, the men, when transhipped from their own vessel, would feel that they were still on board a man-of-war, and consequently be less disposed to depart from their wonted habits of subordination. But in these hulks, as they are at present constituted, it is by no means easy to maintain unbroken the delicate chain of good discipline—so material a part of whose strength lies beyond the control of formal regulations, and depends for its efficiency mainly on opinion, association, and habit.

Be this as it may, the officers of the newly commissioned ship take possession of the hulk assigned them—the purser gets from the victualling office provisions enough for present use, and draws from

the same quarter a quantity of slop clothing, as well as bedding and haversacks, for the marines, who are generally the first men on board. They are supplied by the boatswain with hammocks, and thus the Jollies soon feel themselves at home. The captain's clerk having prepared what is called an "open list," he enters the names of the officers and men as fast as they arrive. Hammocks and bedding, as well as blankets and shoes, are issued to those sailors who may come on board without any kit, which is too often the case. The senior lieutenant ought, if possible, to be one of the very first persons who joins, and the sooner he establishes himself on board the hulk the better. The marines, being a standing portion of the service, are always ready, and, if necessary, they may be sent on board at a few hours' warning. On this account, as well as many others, they are a most invaluable body of men. When there is no particular hurry, however, they will be embarked in two or three days at the furthest from the time they receive orders. Application should also be made

for boys, who are supplied as soon as possible; a certain number being sent from the flag-ship, while the remainder are enlisted from the shore. A boat's crew of sailors will very soon be picked up from the stray hands lounging about the Common Hard and Jack's other well-known haunts.

Thus, in a very few days, the foundation of a ship's company is laid; and under good management, with a little patience and cheerfulness, the superstructure will advance rapidly. A rendezvous should be opened at a public-house in some street frequented by the seamen, and a flag, with the ship's name on it, exposed before the door, while bills, containing the ship and captain's name, should be stuck up and distributed in the proper quarters. If her destination be India, South America, the Mediterranean, or any other favourite station, that circumstance will of course be sufficiently noticed in these cards of invitation. The master-at-arms, the captain's coxswain, or some old and steady hand who has an interest in getting the ship manned, will be usefully employed at the

rendezvous, to talk to the sailors as they drop in to consider the pros and cons of the new enterprise in which they are invited to engage. The captain himself, and the first lieutenant also, will generally find it worth their while to look in occasionally, perhaps periodically, at the rendezvous, ostensibly to speak on some business, but chiefly to shew themselves, and, by a word or two of encouragement, to decide the waverers. It is of great consequence, on these occasions, to keep clear of any thing which, by possibility, can be construed into false pretences; for, to say nothing of the moral impropriety of such enticements, their impolicy very soon betrays itself, and when the men detect the fallacy, the result shews itself in the paucity of volunteers. The truth is, Jack, with all his vagaries, possesses a quick discernment in such matters, and is very seldom deceived by chaff. It will seldom, if ever, retard the proper manning of a ship to be very fastidious in choosing amongst the volunteers who offer. The best men will not enter for a ship where sailors are received indiscriminately; and

the lower order of mere working hands are easily picked up to complete the crew.

The men are always carefully examined by the surgeon before being received ; but it would not be a bad rule that no volunteer should be finally entered until he has been seen and approved of by both captain and first lieutenant. It is, indeed, of great consequence to the eventual comfort of the ship, which always turns upon her good and consistent discipline, that the first lieutenant and captain should be cordially agreed on so material a point as the choice of the individual seamen forming the crew. Every one, indeed, will understand the importance of the captain and first lieutenant being on good terms ; but there are very many officers who admit this in words, and even in sentiment, who have by no means sufficient resolution and self-restraint to carry the precept into practice as they ought to do—and perhaps would do, if they could only be made to see the matter in its true light. In some respects the captain may be compared to a king, and the first lieutenant to his prime minister. One is the nominal, recognised

head—the other is the executive chief, the real governor and director of the little state in its daily course of proceedings. The relative duties of king and minister, or captain and lieutenant, may be ever so well defined by written constitutions and official regulations, without producing good government, unless the true philosophy of command, so to call it, be duly understood and practically exercised by both parties.

In the first place, it requires some strength of mind on the part of the nominal chief to satisfy him that his most legitimate authority and his own genuine dignity, as well in apparent as in substantial power, consists in co-operating heartily with his executive officer, and in aiding all his operations, without interfering needlessly with him, or wantonly thwarting him. A curious, but not very unnatural sort of jealousy, however, seems to lurk in the breast of almost every person at the head of a department. If, as may well happen, and indeed must and ought very often to happen, the executive officer, though junior in rank, is the abler and more experienced man of the two, in the

technical details of the work to be executed, the chief may occasionally feel uncomfortable at the obvious superiority of his assistant. But how is this unworthy feeling to be managed? How ought it to be managed? To get rid of the rivalry altogether, and part company, would be very injudicious, though I have known such silly things done. On the other hand, for the chief to attempt to diminish the mortifying inequality by preventing his officer from acting freely, is quite as bad in practice, and more despicable in principle, though I am afraid it is a method too often resorted to by weak-minded commanding officers.

On this subject a good deal might be said; but I shall confine myself at present to one consideration, which relates to the duties of a captain in fitting out a ship. As it is drawn, however, from those general principles upon which the science of discipline depends, it will be found applicable, more or less, to the duties of any charge where the principal authority cannot carry on the details without the assistance of subordinate officers.

During the short visits which the captain pays to his ship when she is in harbour, he will seldom find it useful to supplant, as it were, the zeal of his first lieutenant, by taking upon himself the conduct of the ship's detailed operations. The peculiar duties of the captain, when his ship is fitting out, necessarily require him to be absent from her every day during a considerable portion of the working hours. He has to wait on the admiral to receive fresh instructions; he has to carry on a correspondence with the Admiralty on the various equipments of the ship; he has representations and applications to make to the port-admiral respecting officers and men, and to the admiral superintendent of the dock-yard, respecting stores; for he must never take it for granted that the subordinate authorities at the dock-yard, the victualling office, or the gun-wharf, are all proceeding in the exact manner in which he wishes, and fancies he is entitled to expect. If he is sincerely desirous that his ship should be expeditiously and well supplied, he must constantly devote a great share of his time

and personal exertions to visit all those places, and to let it be seen and felt that he really understands how things ought to be done, and that he is noting their progress. In short, whether at the rendezvous, at the dock-yard, at the admiral's office, or at his own desk in his lodgings, the captain will generally find ample employment on shore for most of the best hours of his day, in really co-operating with his first lieutenant afloat, by seeing those duties properly executed which lie beyond that officer's reach. If these multifarious and important obligations, out of the ship, be fully complied with by the captain, he will seldom have more time left than is barely necessary to go on board—to see what is doing—to learn what has been done—and to give his orders, in a general way, to the first lieutenant, for his further guidance. If, however, during the hour or two that he is afloat, he chooses to carry on the details of the ship's duty, he will often, I fear, interrupt and retard, instead of advance the service. Officers of experience generally become well aware of the incon-

venience of such interference ; and knowing its actual injury, not only to the progress of the work in hand, but to the general cause of discipline, and knowing also the irritation which it occasionally produces, they very seldom supersede the authority of the executive officers, even when certain that they could direct matters somewhat better. Independently of the evils which always spring from divided responsibility and divided credit, it is obvious that more mischief must always arise from the absence of uniformity in the conduct of affairs than can be repaired by any occasional superiority in the management of some particular points of the duty. This holds good even when the captain is decidedly the abler man of the two ; but when a weak or imperfectly informed person holds the chief authority, he is very apt to catch a new idea from what is passing before him, and, being delighted with his accidental acquisition, he cannot let the opportunity pass of displaying his new-found knowledge.

This unworthy course is also sometimes followed by those who are so conscious of

inferiority, that, unless they are eternally fussing and interfering, they suspect the persons under them may possibly question their competency to fill the official station in which they are placed. They draw as largely; therefore, as they can upon the small stock of knowledge which they have acquired in subordinate walks of the profession, and make a vast parade with little solid learning. Be the motive, however, what it may, jealousy, or vanity, or mere fidget, it matters not much—the result is invariably hurtful to good order on board ship. It naturally provokes the indignation of the executive officer who knows his duty well, and feels that he has been doing what is correct; and it excites no respect in the men, whose attention is drawn to the incongruity of the captain doing an officer's work; while it plainly interferes with the time and attention which the captain ought to give to matters of a different stamp, and which, if he neglects, no one can do for him.

As a captain has not always the choice of his first lieutenant, on foreign stations especially, it may sometimes happen that

a person unfit to fulfil the duties of that office will be appointed. Filling this station well implies not only knowledge and talents, but a disposition to enter cordially into the views of the captain, as well with regard to the general system of discipline, as to all the details of managing the ship. When an unfit person is appointed, it is much better for the lieutenant, as well as the captain, that they should part; and certainly this is more conducive to the discipline of the ship, and therefore to the good of the service, than if they went on for ever like cat and dog. This, indeed, is so well understood, that the Admiralty throw no obstacles in the way of officers exchanging. But an over laxity in this matter is to be avoided, since it has occasionally been made the means of continuing officers in the service, who ought perhaps to have been dismissed for offences committed under an easy tempered and placable commander.

In case the unfitness of the first lieutenant arises from absolute incompetence or negligence of his duties, it will soon appear in some palpable instance, for

which he must be accountable before a court-martial, unless his captain permit him to quit the ship to avoid that alternative. On the other hand, it will sometimes happen, that an officer who is both competent and zealous, is rather too fond of having his own way, and interpreting the rules and customs of the service in his own particular fashion, in opposition to the views of the captain. This pertinacity detracts from his efficiency as an officer, and more particularly from his fitness for the arduous and delicate situation of first lieutenant, by preventing the establishment of a hearty co-operation with his superior. But if the considerate line of conduct before suggested be acted upon by the captain, unless the lieutenant be a very pig-headed person, who mistakes opposition for zeal, he will readily see that the true way of forwarding the service is to enter heartily, cheerfully, and attentively, into the peculiar plans of his chief. If he does not do this, he will only find his duties become more and more irksome to himself, and all his zeal will often be thrown away in ineffectual efforts.

When a ship is fairly commissioned, the first proceedings of the captain, in respect to her equipment, must be determined by the particular state in which she happens to be. The ship may be in dock, or in the basin, or riding at the moorings — masted, or unmasted; she may have only just been launched, or may have been “paid off all standing.” In any case, one of the first points to be attended to is the stowage of the ballast. If the ship has been in commission before, a record of her sailing qualities, and the plan of stowage which was found to answer best, will be supplied by the superintendent of the dockyard, together with her draught of water, forward and aft, light as launched and in ballast; and, lastly, when completely equipped for sea, with guns, powder, provisions, and men on board. If the ship be new, the captain will be furnished by the Surveyor of the Navy with every particular respecting her trim, and the manner in which he conceives her hold should be stowed. If this very important part of the ship’s economy be one that has occupied its due share of the commanding officer’s attention,

he will carefully examine the conformation of the ship's bottom, and be enabled to tell whether or not the former plan of stowing the ballast agrees with his own theoretical views and his experience in such matters, and then putting the ship's recorded sailing qualities by the side of these actual observations, he will be enabled to decide how the ballast shall be distributed.

The Signal Books, Printed Naval Instructions, The Admiralty Statutes, and other works of reference and guidance, are supplied by the port-admiral, while a copy of all the Port Regulations and Orders should be made without loss of time, and be so carefully perused by the captain and officers, as to be almost got by heart. A minute attention, indeed, to the injunctions contained in these written orders, is absolutely necessary towards keeping the officers of a ship out of eternal hot water with admiral, flag-captain, secretary, and first lieutenant of the flag-ship, all of whom are put out of their way by the neglect of an officer fitting or refitting a ship.

I remember once a grand row which I,

in common with three or four other commanding officers, got into. A signal was made from the flag-ship at Spithead, the Royal William, or the Royal Billy, as she was universally called—the dear old Royal Billy! who can forget her? The order was, “The ships at Spithead are to send boats to assist the vessel in distress.” On looking round, we could see nothing but a collier aground on the end of the spit. One boat, or perhaps two, were sent from some of the ships—but not enough to save her; so poor Jock lay on the shoal till he capsised, and there was an end of him; for it came on to blow, and the shore, from South Sea Castle to Blackhouse Point, was a complete beach of coal shingle. Next morning out came a swinging reprimand to all of us, ordering a “report in writing to be made forthwith of the reasons why the signal made at four P. M. to send boats to the collier had not been obeyed.”

I recommend folks fitting out, therefore, as they value their peace, to trifle with any thing rather than the port orders. For it is well to consider, that a scold resembles a snow-ball—it always gathers

weight as it rolls along. Thus the Admiralty send down, by post or by telegraph, a rap on the knuckles to the old admiral—very moderate as naval things go, but such as, in civil life, would make a sober citizen frantic, though it merely squeezes out a growl from the venerable commander-in-chief. Straightway he rings for the secretary, and issues a smartish general order, in which the wretched captain of the offending ship catches the reprimand, with a most usurious allowance of interest. Off goes the said skipper to his ship, in a great fume and hurry, carrying a whole sail in the gig, though on ordinary occasions he chooses to have a reef in. Souse comes the wiggling on the hapless first lieutenant; and he, in turn, only waits till the captain goes below, that he may open a volcano of reproaches on the long-suffering middies, who though they probably now hear of the offence for the first time, know much better than to make any reply.

Such is naval discipline!—a strange mixture of justice and injustice—severity and indulgence—frankness and wrong-

headedness — encouragement and unfair dealing ; but still we may be sure that talents, industry, perseverance, and, above all, resolute cheerfulness, with an absence of the litigious habit of self-justification, must either ensure success and happiness, or give the best chance for them, in spite of scrapes and scolds.

The first lieutenant of the ship fitting out will do well to have by him a sheet of paper, ruled according to the following scheme, or any other tabular form, in which he may insert the names of the men who enter, that he may form some idea, when he comes to station them, what part of the ship each is fit for.

List of Volunteers for His Majesty's Ship Conway.

Name.	Age.	No. of Years.		In last Ship.		What trade or handicraft besides a sailor.	Where born, or where belonging.	Remarks, &c.
		At Sea.	In the Navy.	Where stationed.	In what boat.			
Peter Yeo	30	...	16	B's. Mate.		None.	Cornwall.	Bred in the Navy.
Pat. Murphy	21	2	...	Ord'y.	Launch.	Tailor.	Dublin.	A voyage to India.
John Wilson	36	18	14	F. Castle.	All boats.	Sail-maker.	Lewis.	
A. Jamieson	29	16	10	Fore Top.	Cutter.	Baker.	Alloa.	
Ed. Roberts...	36	...	5	Butcher.		Butcher.	Derby.	Once a prize-fighter.

A watch bill should be commenced at once ; and the men, as fast as they come on board, appointed, as near as may be, to the stations which the officers think they will ultimately occupy. This lets a man know at once what duty he will be required to perform, and makes him feel at home. Some crack sailors will not volunteer unless they can be made reasonably sure of being placed in a station they like ; and although it would be highly injudicious to make such absolute stipulations without some previous trial of the candidate's abilities, it may be of great advantage to the service to enter men more or less on this principle. For instance, it is of the utmost importance to obtain steady petty officers, that is to say, quarter-master's, gunner's, boatswain's and carpenter's mates ; captains of the forecastle, the hold, and the tops ; sail-makers, armourers, caulkers, and coopers ; with others of less consequence, but all valuable in their respective departments, and contributing to make up the singular population of a man-of-war. The following list contains the peace establishment of the Conway, a

ship of 28 guns, which I fitted out in the beginning of 1820. The document may perhaps interest persons who like to inquire into the details of a community and ménage so differently constructed from any they are likely to meet with elsewhere.

“ A Scheme of the Establishment of His Majesty's Ship Conway, with a complement of 125 men.

		Brought forward ...	25
Captain	1	Boatswain's Mates ...	2
Lieutenants	3	Quarter-masters	3
Master	1	Captain's Coxswain ..	1
Second Master	1	Captains of the Fore-}	2
Purser	1	castle	
Surgeon	1	Cooper	1
Boatswain	1	Captains of the Fore-}	2
Gunner	1	top	
Carpenter	1	Capt. of the Maintop	2
Master's Mate	1	———— Afterguard	1
Midshipmen	4	———— Mast	1
Assistant Surgeon ...	1	Ship's Cook .	1
Clerk	1	Volunteers, First Class	3
Schoolmaster	1	Gunner's Crew	5
Master at Arms	1	Carpenter's Crew	4
Caulker	1	Sailmaker's Crew	1
Armourer	1	Gunner's Yeoman ...	1
Sailmaker	1	Boatswain's ditto	1
Carpenter's Mate	1	Carpenter's ditto.	1
Gunner's Mate	1	Cook's Mate ...	1
	Carry forward ...		58
	25		

Brought forward ...	58	Brought forward ...	65
Barber	1	Able Seamen	} ... 29
Purser's Steward	1	Ordinary Seamen	
Captain's Steward ...	1	Landmen	
Captain's Cook	1	Boys Second Class	5
Gun-room Steward ...	1	—— Third Class	5
Gun-room Cook	1	Widow's Men	3
Steward's Mate	1		
			107
Carry forward ...	65		

Marines : 1 Lieutenant ; 1 Serjeant ; 1 Cor- poral ; 1 Drummer ; 14 Privates	18
Total ...	125

The last odd entry of three widow's men was an official fiction (now abolished), by which the pay of so many imaginary persons was transferred to a fund for the relief of the widows of commissioned and warrant officers. Real men are now allowed in their places.

If any other ship be paying off at the same time, it is well worth trying to get some of her best men to enter for the ship fitting out. People who have been for several years together in a comfortable ship feel unwilling to part, and the prospect of continuing still companions, often influences them to volunteer in consider-

able numbers, if other circumstances appear suitable. When this takes place, the men generally transfer their whole kit at once, see their names placed on the new ship's books, and obtain what is called "long leave" of absence to visit their friends, after depositing a portion of their ready money in the hands of the commanding officer until their return. These men almost always form a valuable part of a ship's crew, and, I am convinced, the practice will become more general of removing direct from one man-of-war to another, whenever the system of frequent payments shall be established in the Navy. The sailors will then learn the proper use of money, and will acquire, in consequence, more orderly and decent, and I may say rational, habits. At present, Jack generally thinks he can do better by carrying on shore his pocket full of cash—the earnings of several years; and it is seldom, until he has been robbed and stripped by the land-sharks of both sexes, and cast into the kennel, that he thinks of returning to sobriety. It requires, indeed, no great experience of poverty and

dissoluteness to make him court again that wholesome restraint which, while it checks his licentious freedom, recognises and rewards his merits, and affords him, or might, and ought to afford him, as much liberty as the nature of the profession he has chosen renders possible.

By these and other means, if the captain and officers be at all popular in their manners, or be known favourably in the service, or if even without these advantages, the intended station to which the ship is going be a favourite one, and ordinary pains be taken at the rendezvous, the ship's company soon begins to assume a respectable and business-like appearance. It then becomes of infinite importance, that the first lieutenant should introduce a uniform and well-explained system of discipline on board, especially as regards cleanliness and neatness of appearance, which are best effected by frequent and regular musterings, without too much fastidiousness in the first instance, as this might only tease the men, and prevent the effectual establishment of those observances which it is the chief purpose

of good discipline to render habitual. Great efforts should always be made to give to Sunday its true character of a day of piety, repose, and reflection ; and in the weekly mustering, in particular, a good deal may generally be accomplished towards imparting to the ship and crew the appearance of order and even elegance, which in times more advanced ought to characterise them during the whole week. The stock of clothes amongst the men will, it is true, generally be scanty at first, but a portion of it may, with proper management, be always kept clean, and a well bleached shirt and trowsers, with a good scrape of the chin, and a thorough scrubbing from top to toe, render poor Jack's toilet, if not the most refined in the world, certainly very effectual towards its purpose. I have often been amused to see the merry style in which they employed great lumps of coarse soap and hard brushes, in vain endeavours to remove the umber tints of tar from their hands, and the tanning of the sunshine from their brawny arms. These indelible distinctions of their hard service, are rendered more striking at such mo-

ments by their contrast with the firm and healthy whiteness of the skin round their shoulders and chest.

An officer must be cautious how he issues slop clothing to newly entered men, who have no pay due ; and a sharp, but reserved look-out ought to be kept on any suspicious characters as they go over the side on leave, for there will ever be found at the great naval stations a certain number of regular-built swindlers, who wander from port to port expressly to pilfer. These vagabonds enter on board newly commissioned ships, make a great show of activity, and remain a certain time to lull suspicion. They then take up slops, that is, obtain from the purser as many shirts, trousers, shoes, and other articles, as they can persuade the commanding officer they are in want of ; after which they desert upon the first opportunity, only to run the same rig in some other ship. When a character of this kind is caught in the act of making off with his own or his messmate's blanket, it is best to let him go on shore (minus the blanket, of course), and the chances are he will not return again. You lose the man,

doubtless, but, like Dogberry, you may “thank God you are rid of a knave.”

In the treatment of the men at this stage of a ship's fitting out, a good deal of discretion is necessary. If the reins of discipline be held too tightly, the young crew are apt to become restive; and if severe means are then resorted to in order to establish authority, the accession of fresh hands is apt to be seriously checked, although nothing may have been done which, with a little more time, might not have been gradually and usefully adopted. On the other hand, if there be too much laxity in the system, all experience proves that disorder will soon follow, chiefly, I believe, from the unequal pressure of the work on those shoulders which are willing to bear it, to the obvious encouragement of the indolence of those whom nothing but good order and close superintendence will keep usefully employed.

It is a fatal error in an officer to court popularity by unworthy means, or indeed by any means, except those of fair-dealing and strict propriety, equal justice to all, and as much indulgence as the nature of

the service will admit of. But, at the same time, great advantage may be taken of accidental opportunities of putting the people into good humour during an outfit, and, by indulging them in a jollification, we may occasionally give them something to think of at the moment, and for weeks afterwards.

When I was fitting out his majesty's sloop *Lyra* at Deptford, in 1815, to accompany the embassy to China, under Lord Amherst, it occurred to me one cold morning, the 24th of December, that it might not have a bad effect on the good name of my pretty little craft, if I gave the ship's company a regular blow-out the next day. I communicated this idea to the first lieutenant, who, seeing no objection, sent for some of the leading men, and said each mess was to have a goose and a turkey for their Christmas dinner. My steward was then told to arrange the details; and presently he came to report, that the men had taken it into their heads, that as the best poultry was to be procured in London, they should like exceedingly to be allowed to despatch an embassy to

Leadenhall Market for that purpose. Of course, the first lieutenant agreed also to this, and two seamen and one marine were forthwith landed at Deptford, to execute the mission. A cart being hired, off they set, returning before sunset, with as noisy a cargo as ever I saw packed together. It so happened, that while we lay on one side of the hulk — I forget her name, another ship was lashed on the opposite side for some temporary purpose. The crew of our neighbour dined on Christmas day on soup and beef as usual, and remained contented enough till some of our fellows, waddling under the effects of double allowance of solids, and perhaps with a trifle too much of fluids, came singing and capering along the deck of their hulk. In the most good-humoured way possible, they asked their neighbours how many geese and turkeys they had discussed that day. The meagre answer called forth shouts of merriment, and the poor fellows belonging to the other ship were rather unhandsomely taunted with the scantiness of their Christmas fare. “Look at that and weep, you hungry-

faced rascals!" exclaimed one of our jolly blades, holding up the drumstick of a goose in one hand and that of a turkey in the other. He was answered by the practical joke of having the two bones twisted from his hands and shyed in his face, according to the most approved fashion of tarpaulin manners. This was the signal for a general *mélée*, and the officers had enough to do to separate the contending hosts.

A few days before the next Christmas day came round, when we were lying in the river of Canton, in China, my steward came to me and said—

"The people, sir, have been talking for the last two or three weeks of hardly any thing else but the 'row' at Deptford this time twelvemonth, when you gave them a feast on Christmas day."

"Well—what of that?"

"Oh, nothing, sir; I only thought you might like to know it. There are plenty of ducks and geese at the Chinese village close to us."

I seized the idea in a moment; and having, as before, consulted with the first

lieutenant, I bade my steward prepare a good stock accordingly. I took no further charge of the matter; nor did I expect to hear any thing more of the dinner or its preparations. In this, however, I was deceived; for when daylight appeared on Christmas morning of 1816, such a racket was heard from our little vessel as brought up all hands on board every one of the ten or a dozen huge East India Company's ships amongst which we were anchored, at a place called Second Bar. Our fellows had carried the whole of their Christmas poultry aloft, and having perched themselves at the yard-arms and on the cross-trees, gaff and flying jib-boom ends, they made each of the wretched birds fast with a string six or eight feet long, in such a manner that they could flap their wings, but could not escape. The great difficulty, as I afterwards learned, was how to keep the ducks and geese from making a noise till the proper moment arrived, and this was not effected without sundry bites and scratches. As soon as broad daylight came, the word was given, and the whole flock being

dropped to the full length of their lines, they set up such a screaming, cackling, and flapping, as could not fail, when aided by the mingled laughter and shouts of their future demolishers, to call the envious attention of the whole surrounding fleet!

It is very useful to keep the people in a good humour, not only when fitting out, but at all times; though, as I have already suggested, great care must be taken, especially by the captain, to avoid even the appearance of courting popularity at the expense of his officers. Such an unworthy course of proceeding strikes at the root of discipline, or, to use a more correct figure, it lops away its branches, and is sure to extend its withering influence over the whole. Mutual confidence between the leading authorities of a ship is quite essential to obedience and good order throughout; and as not only the subordinate officers, but the seamen themselves, down to the cook's mate, possess a quickness of perception for such things, which no false pretences of confidence, no attention to forms, can hide,

it becomes the captain's duty rather to incur occasional odium in defence of his first lieutenant, than shabbily to steal popularity from him.

A truly right-minded officer, therefore, at the head of any department, whether it be that of a ship, a fleet, an army, or a cabinet, will seldom, if ever, take into his calculations the effect which any measure is to produce on himself or his own selfish interests—but will steadily seek to discover what is best for the public service. And if such research be made in the proper spirit of generous self-devotion to his duty, it will not unfrequently happen that he may essentially advance the cause of good discipline, by transferring the credit of success, which technically might be his own due, to those with whom he happens to be co-operating, and without whose companionship and industrious attention to details, though unseen and unknown to the world, he might never have gained his point. It is more difficult, indeed, but still more generous, and proportionably more useful in practice, for the chief to bear manfully the brunt of failure ;

and in seasons when measures of an unpopular character become necessary, to charge himself with a large share of that loss of favour which he is best able to afford.

It is easy to write about such precepts—very hard to exercise them; but universal experience seems to prove, that they form by far the most certain and least fragile ties by which the marvellous framework of human government is knit together, in all its branches, civil, military, and domestic.

CHAPTER II.

FITTING OUT.

IN the course of a week or ten days after a ship is commissioned, the officers are collected on board their hulk, and they bestir themselves to gather their comforts about them. In the first instance they look after their 'noble selves,' by selecting, at some small salary extra per month, a boy or a marine a-piece, for a valet, to brush their clothes and polish their boots. They next find out a good steward, and having installed him in possession of the nascent stock of gun-room crockery, make him hunt for a cook, generally a black man, who takes into his sable keeping the pots and pans of the growing mess. The mates and midshipmen, a portion of whom are appointed by the Admiralty, and a portion by the captain, gradually make their appearance, and settle into their dungeon of a birth

under the caterage of some old boy of a captain's clerk or hard-a-weather mate of the decks. A pretty large proportion of youngsters also, or squeakers, who cannot be appointed without the previous consent of the Admiralty, spring up like mushrooms, with rosy cheeks and tender hands — totally unconscious, poor little fellows! of the rugged lives they are soon to lead. They look about them with an apprehensive smile at the bustle, or start at the harsh sound of orders, whose import, and even words, are as yet strange to their delicate ears.

If these boys had only sense enough to look on quietly, and pay attention to all that is passing, with a sincere desire to understand it, and were they to be assisted a little in their inquiries, they might on such occasions as that of a ship fitting out, manage to learn and store up much that would prove valuable on a future day. But these youths are generally just let loose from the Naval College, or from school, or from mamma's apron-string; and unless they are looked after and encouraged, they are too volatile to pay a

proper degree of attention to the duty which is going on. In truth, almost the only way to render what is passing useful to them, is to devise methods for turning their services to real account; and, after all, it does not require much ingenuity to arrange this, even at first, provided their numbers be not so great that they stand in one another's way. Three or four youngsters, even though absolute novices, might always be kept well employed in a sloop of war, and perhaps twice that number in a frigate or line-of-battle ship fitting. At present, however, and generally speaking, in peace time, it will happen that the crowd of young gentlemen is so great, and the disposition to learn so little diffused amongst them, that the first lieutenant is often glad to get rid of them altogether by letting them waste their time and money on shore.

Much has been written and said of the dissolute manners of the men and officers in the hulk of a ship fitting out; but there appears to me little more foundation for these charges, than belongs to similar accusations against ships otherwise situ-

ated. There exist equal means in the hulk as on board the ship for maintaining good order; and if these be not exerted, the fault lies with the particular commanding officer, not with the situation.

The state in which the ship happens to be at the time she is commissioned, must decide, as I said before, the course to be followed in her equipment. If she be already masted and alongside the hulk, and the ballast in, the officer will most likely wish to make some show in the way of rigging—for as yet the masts are naked to the girt-lines, or single ropes rove through blocks at the mast-head, by which first the men and then the shrouds are drawn up, and the eyes of the rigging placed over the mast-heads. If there be only a few sailors on board, these can be employed to get off the furniture—that is, all the blocks, ready stropped in the rigging-loft; and to draw the present use stores, from the dock-yard. These can all be kept under lock and key in the store-rooms of the hulk; and if the rigging, and every thing required in placing it aloft, be previously fitted and arranged

by the boatswain, so that he can put his hand at once on the gear as soon as a sufficient number of the crew join, much time will be saved. Even the lower rigging may be got off all ready fitted from the loft; while the runners and tackles, the luffs, and other purchases, may be put in preparation for use the moment there are hands enough to employ them.

By application to the boatswain of the yard, assistance will be given to gammon the bowsprit, preparatory to its being clothed, which is the technical term for rigging that important spar. The operation of gammoning, in which the marines can take an active part, by heaving at the capstan, I am not very sure if I can describe in a manner intelligible to shore-going folks.

Every one knows, however, what the bowsprit is; and those who are most observant, will have discovered that one of its principal offices is to support the foremast and foretopmast, by means of their stays, as the slanting ropes are called which stretch forwards and downwards from the head of every mast, great and small, in

the ship. Some of these, as the main-stay, lie at so inconsiderable an angle with the horizon, that they possess great power of sustaining the mast; while others, such as the fore-stay, being necessarily more perpendicular, do not act to such good mechanical purpose. There is a peculiar disadvantage attending the method of securing the fore-stay, arising from the position of the mast. It is placed so near the extremity of the ship, that the stay, which forms its only support in the forward direction, cannot be attached to the body of the vessel, without making so very small an angle with the mast as would divest it of nearly all its character as a supporter. To remedy this, the bowsprit has been devised, chiefly, I have no doubt, as an out-rigger for the fore-stay. But in order to render the spar effective for that purpose, it requires to be very strongly bound down. There has, therefore, been contrived what is called the stem, or cut-water, which is a strong but narrow projection from the bows, securely fastened by long and thick bolts of iron and copper to the body of the ship. The chief pur-

pose of this stem is to furnish a point of support for the ropes securing the bowsprit. Of these, the most important is called the gammoning, which consists of a strong and well-stretched hawser, passed up and down successively, in perpendicular turns, over the bowsprit and through a hole horizontally cut in the stem. At each turn the gammoning hawser is hove taught, while every effort is used to bring the bowsprit down into its place. A heavy boat is sometimes suspended from the end, the weight of which greatly assists the gammoning process. Another set of ropes, called bob-stays, extending from about one-third from the outer end of the bowsprit to the cutwater, nearly at the water-line, contribute essentially to its stability. It is further secured in a lateral direction by shrouds reaching from its extremity to the bows of the ship.

I need not mention, that in order to give a finish, as it were, to the end of the ship, and to convert that into a source of ornament which might otherwise be deemed a deformity, the top of the stem has been appropriated as the

position of the figure-head, the characteristic emblem of the vessel. In some ships the sailors pride themselves especially on the beauty of their figure-head; and many a time I have seen the captain of the forecastle employed for hours in painting the eyes, hair, and drapery of his favourite idol. I suppose few commanding officers will allow of this liberty; for it must be owned that as Jack's taste in female beauty, and in the disposition and colours of dress, are borrowed from a very questionable source, where the naked truth, as it is called, predominates sadly over the beau idéal, his labours in adorning the figure-head are apt to produce strange monsters. I once heard of a captain who indulged his boatswain in this whim of representing his absent love as far as the king's allowance of paint could carry the art; and it must be owned, that as the original Dulcinea owed her roses to the same source, the representation "came very close aboard of the original," as the delighted boatswain expressed it. This very proximity in colouring, scantiness of drapery, and so

forth, which formed the boatswain's pride, perplexed the worthy captain, who had given his sanction to the work, for he could never cross the bows of his own ship with a party of friends, without raising a laugh at the expense of his taste in figures. The whole crew, however, soon fell as much in love with the damsel as the boatswain had done before them ; and it would have been cruel to have sent the painter to daub her ladyship all over with one uniform colour, according to the general fashion. The considerate commander took a different line.

“ You seem proud of your head, Mr. Clearpipe, I shall gild her for you ! ”

In a few days, the sparkling eyes and blushing cheeks of Mrs. Boatswain, like Danæe, had yielded up their charms to the golden shower. The glittering figure-head soon became the delight of the ship's company, and on one occasion furnished the captain with rather an odd means of calling out their energies. The ship was sailing in company with several others of the same class, and when they all came to reef topsails together, she was beat on

the first occasion. As they were setting about a second trial of activity, the captain called out to the people aloft —

“ Now, I tell you what it is, my lads, unless you are off the yards, and the sails are hoisted again before any other ship in the squadron, by the Lord Harry, I'll paint your figure-head black !” From that time forward, she beat every ship in the fleet.

As soon as a sufficient number of hands are collected on board the ship which is fitting out, all the spars, except the spare ones, may be got off to the hulk. These consist of topsail-yards, topmasts, and topgallant masts and yards, jib and spanker boom, studding-sail booms, and one or two others. The lower and topsail-yards can be fitted on the hulk's decks, ready to be swayed into their places when the masts are in a state to receive them. If a dock-yard lump, or lighter, can be got to put all the spars in, together with the tops and other things which are usually made into a raft and floated off, it may save a great deal of trouble ; as it frequently happens that they cannot all be got in before night,

and if bad weather comes on, they may break adrift and be lost.

There seems no fixed rule for rigging a ship progressively. Different officers adopt different ways of setting about this operation, and slight varieties occur in the arrangement of the ropes ; but, generally speaking, every thing is disposed according to the long-established rules of seamanship, and it all comes nearly to the same at last. I could hardly hope to make the details of rigging a ship intelligible to landsmen. It may, however, be said, that the grand object is to support each mast laterally by a number of shrouds on each side, inclining slightly abaft the perpendicular, to prevent its falling either sideways or forwards, and also, by means of two stays, the principal stay and the spring stay, both stretching in the line of the keel, to hold it forwards. The width of the ship affords what is called a spread for the rigging, which spread is augmented by the application of broad shelves, called channels, carrying the rigging three or four feet further out on each side, and making its angle with the mast greater, and con-

sequently increasing the support of the shrouds. These channels act merely as out-riggers, for the ultimate point of fixture, or that against which the shrouds pull, is lower down, where long links of iron, called chain-plates, are securely bolted through and through the solid ribs of the ship, and rivetted within. The upper ends of these chain-plates are furnished with what are called dead eyes, great round blocks of wood pierced with holes, through which the lanyards are rove by which the rigging is set up, or drawn almost as tight as bars of iron. The topmasts, rising immediately above the lower masts, are supported chiefly by rigging spread out by the tops, or what people on shore mis-call round-tops. These, like the channels for the lower rigging, are mere projections or out-riggers; the true point of support for the topmast rigging is the lower shrouds, the connexion being made by what are called futtock shrouds and catharpins. The top-gallant masts, at the next stage aloft, are supported by shrouds passing through the ends of small spars, called cross-trees, at the head of the top-

mast; and so on in succession, up to the sky-scrapers and moon-rakers in some very fly-away ships.

As early as possible, the boats which are duly warranted for the ship should be selected, and their equipment superintended, or occasionally looked at by the officers of the ship, who are the persons most interested in their completion. The master boat-builder will generally attend to any little extra fittings that the first lieutenant may have a fancy for—such as the arrangement of the kedge and stream-anchor davits, the slide for the carronade in the launch, and so on. The boats will be painted of any required colour, provided that colour be consistent with the dock-yard regulations; if any other be required, the captain must purchase it himself, but the dock-yard painters will lay it on. In the same way, if the gun carriages are to be painted of any particular or fancy colour, the people at the gun-wharf will prime them in a manner suited to that colour, but no more.

I may here take occasion to remark, that in the numberless dock-yards I have

drawn stores from, or at which I have fitted out, or paid off, or re-equipped ships, I never met with any real difficulty in getting all that was reasonable from the officers in any department. I have heard, indeed, one and all of these persons abused over and over again, for being crusty and disobliging; for pertinacity in sticking to the mere letter of their instructions, and forgetting its spirit; and for throwing obstacles in the way of the service, instead of promoting its advancement. But I can only say for myself, and for others who I know to have adopted the same plan, that I never met with any thing but a hearty zeal to furnish all that was right, and that too in the pleasantest manner, provided the proper degree of civility were used in making the application.

People too often forget, that politeness, punctuality, and general attention to business, are all reciprocal qualities; and that unless they themselves employ such means in their intercourse with official authorities, it is hopeless to expect these authorities will put themselves one inch out of their way to oblige persons who

manifestly hold them in contempt. In reply to this, I have often heard it asserted, that these officials ought to be made to do their duty equally well to all, and that the idea of being civil to a dock-yard officer, in order to obtain that which is necessary for his Majesty's service, is absurd. But I have only to say, that until we can procure angels to take the office of master-attendant, master-shipwright, store-keeper, and so forth, the laws and customs of human nature will continue to regulate such influences. Your gruff and sulky letter-of-the-law man will, no doubt, get his ship fitted, in process of time, but not half so well, nor nearly so quickly, as he who takes matters cheerfully, and understands the art of receiving what he is officially entitled to, more or less as if it were a personal favour done to himself.

When a sufficient number of hands have been volunteered at the rendezvous, and stationed to the different parts of the ship's duty, the first lieutenant should form them into separate working parties, as carefully selected as possible for the different kinds of work required. The gun-

ner will carry one of these gangs of hands to the ordnance-wharf, to fit the tackles and breechings : another party will be sent to the sail-loft to fit the sails : a third may be occupied with stowing the water-tanks, and preparing the holds for the provisions : while some hands should be sent to weave mats for covering the different parts of the rigging. The carpenters form a most important department of the crew, as there are many little jobs to be attended to in every part of the ship which the dock-yard pass over ; and it is useful to have one or two carpenters always ready at a call to drive in a nail here, or fix a cleat there, or to ease or fill up what does not fit nicely.

When a ship is first commissioned, the captain should apply to the builder to have the caulking of the sides, and especially of the decks, carefully examined, and if this important operation is to be repeated, it should be got over as soon as may be. If the caulking be delayed, as too frequently occurs, till after the ship is equipped and painted, and the guns mounted, off comes a noisy gang of caulkers, who daub her all

over with pitch, the removal of which is a troublesome, and always a dirty operation.

Old hammocks are generally supplied for the men to sleep in while the ship is fitting, and returned when she goes out of harbour. But two sets of new hammocks ought to be got on board the hulk ready to be numbered as soon as a neat-handed man of letters can be enlisted for that purpose; and as every hammock requires to have a legible number marked on it, this occupies some time, and should be set about as early as possible, that all may be dry and ready against going to sea.

If the ship be new, it will be of great advantage that the captain or first lieutenant should point out to the dock-yard officers what he considers the best place for the bulk-heads, or partitions separating the different holds from one another. The main hold, for example, if fitted strictly according to rule, or if it be left to the general guess of the superintending shipwright, may chance to be long enough to stow a certain number of water-tanks, together with a foot or two over and above; now this lost space, if thrown into the after-

hold, might prove sufficient to gain another entire 'longer' or range of provision-casks. In the same way, the bulk-head which is common to the spirit-room and after-hold may, by timely adjustment, be so placed as to gain much useful space. These things, I believe, are now much more attended to than formerly in the original fitting of the ship; but I mention them to prevent, as far as may be, the dangerous practice of taking that for granted which admits of further examination. Moreover, as no two vessels are exactly alike in all their dimensions, and correct seamanship is guided by principles which an officer ought to understand, it will not do to rely upon things being done properly when they are done by rule-of-thumb. Thus the position of the main-tack block, and those of the fore and main sheets, the main-brace blocks, topsail sheet and brace bitts, with the number of sheeves in each, and twenty other things relating to kevels, cleats, and belaying-pins, will be dependent for much of their eventual efficiency on the length of the yards, the size of the sails, and other circumstances which it is

quite in vain, and quite unreasonable to expect the dock-yard workmen to take into account.

By the time the dear little bark, to which every one has ere this become attached, is so far advanced as to have all her spars on end, the artificers will have completed their hammerings, sawings, and nailings, and the main-hold will have been stowed with water-tanks. It is then right to draw the heavy stores from the dock-yard, such as anchors, cables, spare anchor-stocks, fishes for the lower masts, and other spars, forming, when packed together in two lines, one on each side of the upper deck, what are called "the booms." Great care must be taken in stowing these clusters of spars so as to leave room enough between them, and just room enough, for stowing the launch or largest boat. This is managed by the carpenter taking what is called her midship section, and making a slight frame-work model to guide the stowage of the booms.

It may be useful to remark, that although the operations in fitting out a ship are multifarious, and often apparently

much confused, it is of great consequence to carry into them as much routine method as possible. For example, in spite of the frequent interruptions to which the seamen are exposed by the arrival of dock-yard and Victualling-office vessels, which must be cleared, or by any other cause, it will be found very advantageous to adopt a uniform plan by which one set of men shall begin, carry on, and complete the same jobs. In this way the several working parties will come to take an interest and pride in executing their tasks well and quickly, which they never could feel if the responsibility and credit were divided or dissipated by their being sent backwards and forwards from one operation to another. For the purpose of such arrangements, as well as to assist his memory, the first lieutenant may find it useful to write out in the evening a programme of the next day's intended operations, and commencing every morning by this, adhere to it throughout the day as strictly as circumstances will permit. A character of consistency will thus be given to a vast crowd

of operations which otherwise become confused and desultory. The people employed to execute these tasks will soon insensibly discover that their labours are guided by substantial method, and they will work all the more cheerfully and effectively; from a conviction that no time is lost, and that their services are duly appreciated.

The main hold being now stowed, the cables, anchors, and spare spars all on board, the quantity of provisions required to complete for the service appointed—three, four, or six months—may be applied for, and will be sent off in the Victualling-office lighters. The purser then gets on board a proportionate quantity of coals, candles, lanterns, and other stores in his department. The rigging, we must suppose, has in the mean time been repeatedly set up, and is now so well stretched that it is ready for the last pull before going out of harbour. This done, and the dead eyes and ratlines squared, the shroud and backstay mats are put on, and the masts and studding-sail booms carefully scraped. The lower masts, and the heads of the topmasts and top-gallant

masts, are next painted, the yards blacked, and the rigging and backstays fore and aft tarred down. The whole ship ought now to be scraped within and without, and thoroughly cleaned and dried ; after which the painters may be sent for from the dock-yard, and when they have primed the ship, it will be well to give her decks another good scouring. Next black the bends, while the painters finish the upper-works with one or two more coats ; and finally retouch the bends with the blacking-brush.

When the paint is thoroughly dry, the guns and ordnance stores are to be got on board, and all the remaining stores drawn from the dock-yard, leaving nothing, if possible, excepting the gunpowder, to be got off at Spithead. At this stage of the equipment, the ropes forming the running rigging may be rove and cut. At the same time both suits of sails ought to be got on board in a decked lighter, one for stowing away in the sail-room, but completely fitted and ready for use ; the others to be bent to the yards. The hammock-cloths also being now fitted, are brought off ; and if the ship be ‘ going foreign,’

double sets are allowed, both of which in former times used to be painted; but I understand the spare cloths are now very properly supplied unpainted.

The ship being all ready for going out of harbour, the captain makes a report to that effect to the admiral, the working boats are returned, and the new ones drawn, and hoisted in. At the same time all unserviceable stores, worn out in fitting the ship, are returned to the dock-yard, including the hulk hammocks, which must be well scrubbed, dried, and made neatly up. The new hammocks are issued and slung, and the bedding being lashed up in them, they are stowed in the nettings, with their numbers ranged in a straight line, in regular order fore and aft. This arrangement not only gives symmetry, but is useful in affording the means of getting at any particular hammock which may be required; for instance, if a man is taken sick, or persons are required to be sent to other ships.

Generally speaking, indeed, it will be found that the attention bestowed on regularity, neatness, and even dandyism, in

all these minor details, brings with it more than a correspondent degree of practical advantage. The men soon feel a pride in what their officer approves of and shews himself pleased with ; and when once they fall into habits of mutual obligation, if I may so call the process by which people of all ranks, whether commanding others or acting under authority, co-operate in the accomplishment of a common purpose, every thing goes on smoothly and cheerfully. I need scarcely recall to the recollection of any one who has witnessed the practice of such things, the marvellous difference in the efficiency of a ship where the system of discipline is to bully and reproach, and of another where the principle is encouraging and gentlemanlike. In one case the crew work as little as may be, and even take a morbid pleasure in crossing the views of the officers, as much as they possibly can without incurring the risk of punishment ; and they never stir a finger in works not strictly within their assigned duty. In the other case, where good will, a temperate exercise of authority, indulgence when it can by pos-

sibility be granted, and, above all, when no coarse language, unworthy of the lips of an officer and a gentleman is used, the result is very different. All the subordinate authorities, and indeed the crew at large, then become insensibly possessed of an elasticity of obedience which exerts a two-fold influence, by reacting on themselves even more than it operates upon the commanding officer whose judicious deportment has called out the exertion. As truly, therefore, may it be said of the quality of cheerfulness in the conduct of discipline, as of mercy, that it is twice blessed, and is equally beneficial to both parties. I may safely add, that in the strict discipline which is absolutely indispensable in every efficient man-of-war, and under all the circumstances of confinement, privation, and other inevitable hardships to which both officers and men are exposed, such a course of moderation and good-breeding, independently of its salutary effect on the minds of the people, works most admirably for the public service, and more than doubles the results, by rendering men who otherwise might

have been disposed to retard the duty, sincerely zealous in its advancement.

Lord Nelson, that great master of war and discipline, and all that was noble and good in the cause of his country, understood, better perhaps than any other officer, the art of applying these wholesome maxims to the practice of duty at the exact moment of need. We all know the results of his system. Would to God we could all learn really to imitate his example, and not only know what is right, but practise what we know !

I remember hearing that once, during the long and weary period when Lord Nelson was blockading Toulon, he was joined from England by a line-of-battle ship, commanded by an officer who, as the story goes, had long applied for and expected an appointment to a cruising frigate, and who, in consequence of this disappointment, came growling out to join the fleet, in high dudgeon with the Admiralty at being condemned, as he called it, to the galley-slave duty of a blockade, in a wretched old tub of a 74, instead of ranging at large in a gay frigate over the Atlantic

or the Adriatic, and nabbing up prizes by the dozen. It appears farther, that he rather unreasonably extended a portion of his indignation to the admiral, who, of course, had nothing to do with his appointment; and this sulky frame of mind might have proved the captain's ruin, had his admiral been any other than Nelson. But the genius of that great officer appeared to delight in such occasions of recalling people to a sense of their duty, and directing their passions and motives into the channels most useful to themselves and their country. His invariable maxim was, that there might be found more good qualities than bad ones in most people, and that there existed scarcely any one who, by proper management, might not be induced to exert himself heartily to some useful public purpose.

Be this, abstractedly, as it may, it is certain that, on the occasion alluded to, Lord Nelson had somehow got notice of the temper which the new comer had brought with him from home, and he took his wonted line accordingly. Knowing the officer to be a clever man, and

capable of performing good service if he chose, it was Nelson's cue to make it his choice. When, therefore, the captain came on board, full of irritability and provocation, the admiral took no notice, but chatted with him during breakfast on the news from England and other indifferent matters, as if his guest had been in the best humour possible. The other, who was nursing his displeasure, waited only for an opportunity of exploding, when he could do so without a breach of decorum or of the official etiquettes of the service. Lord Nelson soon gave him the occasion he appeared to seek for, by begging him to step into the after-cabin, and then asking him what he thought of the station, and how he should like cruising in the Levant and other interesting parts of the Mediterranean.

“Why, as to that, my lord, I am not very likely to have an opportunity of being able to give an answer. I am sent here against my will to join the blockading fleet, and here, no doubt, I am doomed to stick to the end of the chapter. I care nothing about the Mediterranean, and it would matter little if I did.”

“ I am sorry to hear you speak in that way,” said Nelson, “ for I had reckoned a good deal on your activity, personal knowledge, and abilities, to have executed a service of some consequence in the upper parts of the station. In this view I have been cutting out a cruise for you, which I had hoped might enable you to see every thing that is interesting, and at the same time to execute a delicate and difficult piece of service. But if you really do not fancy it, only say so—it is not a business that can be done well on compulsion, but must be done cheerfully. If you have a mind to go, well and good—if not, I must look out for some one else—but you are the man I should prefer, if it be agreeable to you. Here is a sketch of your orders, and there is the chart—look them over at leisure, and make your decision.”

As Lord Nelson spoke these words he went on deck, leaving the poor man bewildered at the prospect of the very employment he most desired, and not a little ashamed of himself for having betrayed that he had anticipated so different a reception.

The rest of the story is equally characteristic. The captain most gratefully accepted the admiral's offer, sailed on the appointed service, which he executed with such diligence and zeal, that he actually returned to the blockading fleet long within the period he was authorised to bestow on the cruise ; and there he remained ever afterwards performing all the drudgery of the blockading service, not only with zeal, but with the heartiest good humour, springing out of an anxious desire to manifest at once his respect and his affectionate devotion to the matchless officer who had so judiciously taught him the true path to honour.

I should hardly have thought it necessary to point out what is the moral of this story, had I not been asked for it by a most judicious and reflecting person to whom I once related the anecdote, and who remarked that the sulky man got all he asked for. True ; he did so ; but what did Nelson, and through Nelson the country, get in return ? In the first place, the particular service at the outset was well and speedily performed ; and in the next,

the tedious and harassing duty of blockading was executed with spirit by an officer who, had he not been thus judiciously humoured in a trifle, might, possibly, have imparted a tinge of discontent not only to his own crew, but even to the other ships of the fleet. There is but one way of making men exert themselves fully, and that is by making it not only their duty but their pleasure to do their work, as the saying is, 'con amore.' This, at least, appears to have been the moral of all Nelson's rules.

The last thing to be done in fitting out, and before quitting the harbour, is to turn all hands over to their proper ship, and then to scrape, and scrub, and wash the old hulk as effectually as possible, preparatory to her being inspected by the dockyard. This duty is too frequently executed in a negligent manner; and really it is not much to be wondered at, for, as I said before, the hulks are such abominably ugly-looking monsters, that one can take no pride or pleasure in treating them with common decency. The commanding officer, therefore, should be par-

ticularly cautious in seeing this operation effectually performed ; for, if he does not, he will be sure to be called upon next day to send a party of hands, probably at a great inconvenience, to repeat the process.

There are, as will readily be conceived, a hundred minor points to be thought of in the equipment of a ship, to which I have not adverted, relating to the watching, stationing, and quartering of the men and officers ; the birthing and arrangement of the people into messes ; the rules respecting their having leave to go on shore, and so on. It may be well, however, to remind officers that they should never forget that the mere appearance of their ship is a matter of considerable consequence ; and therefore, even in the very busiest times of the outfit, the yards should be carefully squared every evening after the work is over, all the ropes hauled taught, and the decks swept as soon as the artificers leave off work. Not a single person beyond the sentries should ever be allowed to go from the hulk to the ship, except during working hours. This rule

prevents any interference with the tools or unfinished work of the dock-yard men. In a word, the crew should never be allowed to suppose that the discipline of forms and appearances, so to call it, is relaxed, because the usual regularity of working is in some degree interrupted. That a ship is essentially in good order can at once be discovered by a professional eye, in the midst of her most bustling occupations, and at any stage of the outfit.

Last of all the pilot comes on board ; the sails are loosed and hoisted ; and the lashings being cast off from the hulk, the gay ship sails joyously out of harbour and takes up her anchorage at Spithead. Like bees in a new hive, the officers and crew then set to work in good earnest, in getting things into their places, and being all thoroughly tired of harbour, and anxious to get to sea, a fresh feeling of zeal and activity pervades the whole establishment.

The powder is now got on board ; the warrant-officers ' indent ' or sign the proper acknowledgments for their stores at the dock-yard ; and the purser, having completed the stock of provisions, closes

his accounts at the victualling-office. The captain's wife begins to pack up her band-boxes, in order to return home, while the Jews and bum-boat folks are pushing all the interest they can scrape together to induce the first lieutenant to give them the priority of entrance with their goods and chattels on the approaching pay-day; in other words, to invest them with the monopoly of the market on that occasion. The sailors' wives about this period besiege the captain and his lady alternately and interminably with petitions to be allowed to go to sea in the ship, to all, or most of which, a deaf ear must be turned. When all things are put to rights, the port-admiral comes on board to muster and inspect the ship's company, and to see how the different equipments have been attended to.

At length, just before sailing, pay-day comes, and with it many a disgusting scene will ever be associated until the present system be modified. The ship is surrounded by a fleet of boats filled with gangs of queer-looking Jew-pedlars sitting in the midst of piles of slop-clothing, gaudy

handkerchiefs, tawdry trinkets, eggs and butter, red herrings and cheeses, tin-pots, fruit, joints of meat, and bags of potatoes, well concealed beneath which are bottles and bladders filled with the most horribly adulterated spirituous liquors. As many of these dealers as can be conveniently ranged on the quarter-deck and gangways, may be admitted, that the market may be as open and fair as possible; but it is very indiscreet to allow any of them to go on the main deck.

Right happy is that hour when the ship is fairly cleared of all these annoyances — sweethearts and wives inclusive — and when, with the water filled up to the last gallon, the bread-room choak full, and as many quarters of beef got on board as will keep fresh, the joyful sound of “Up anchor!” rings throughout the ship. The capstan is manned; the messenger brought to; round fly the bars; and as the anchor spins buoyantly up to the bows, the jib is hoisted, the topsails sheeted home, and off she goes, merrily before the breeze!

CHAPTER III.

ON NAVAL GUNNERY.

OFFICERS who have served much afloat in old times, tell us that there was a great want of efficiency in that department of naval discipline which relates to the management of the great guns. Many ships, it is true, even during the early period of the last war, were brought into admirable fighting order by dint of the spontaneous exertions of their commanders. But in these instances, the result was generally due to the combined talents, experience, and industry of those particular officers, and owed hardly any thing to the merits of the general system in force throughout the fleet. In too many vessels of war, however, the exercise of the great guns was much neglected, or at most attended to just so far as the technical rules of the service rendered necessary. And this oc-

curred not unfrequently even where there could be traced no want of ability or of zeal on the part of the officers. The naval profession, indeed, is so diversified in its objects, that it offers many interesting fields of view to the attention of those who engage in it heartily ; and as these assume more or less importance in the eyes of commanding officers, according to their several tastes and habits, sometimes one department, and sometimes another gains the ascendancy, too much to the exclusion of the others.

Thus, some men in command dwell with undue attention upon the seamanship part of their duty, and think scarcely of any thing but the rigging and sails, reefing and furling, and consider it an affair of life and death to make or shorten every sail, from royals to courses, in so many seconds. Others devote their thoughts almost wholly to clean decks, clean clothes, clean hammocks. Some think nothing worthy of much attention but the exact navigation of the ship, and in their scientific devotion to the moon and stars, are apt to forget all sublunary affairs. Lastly come

those who hold, that as fighting is the grand object of a ship of war, their duty to their king will be best served by keeping his majesty's arms in good order, and in teaching his servants how to use them. There is much plain sense in this, and it is only to be regretted that this fancy for bringing the warlike part of the profession (a pretty important one!) into an efficient state, was not universal.

Such, however, were the difficulties which officers had to contend with, that in spite of all their zeal, it too often happened that they could not always accomplish their purpose, without neglecting some other important subjects, to which it was likewise their duty to attend. Whatever was the cause, the fact of some of his majesty's ships being formerly left at times in a state of comparative inefficiency in the actual exercise of the great guns, must be admitted ; and were the thing less serious, or less calculated to be attended with a loss of national reputation, we might almost smile at the absurdity of such a state of things. A plain shore-going person might well ask, How

it came about that the art of handling the guns should ever be neglected on board any man-of-war, when such prodigious sums were expended in equipping her, in other respects, with every possible requisite to enable her to cope with her enemies? Our ships are greatly improved in strength and every warlike quality, and there is no lack of supplies in any department, of stores, provisions, ordnance, men, or officers. Why then, to the education which is now so general in every other branch of the profession, should not that of warlike science and gunnery practice be added? It may be useful, however, before adverting to the remedy, to consider, in the first place, what has been the cause of such a singular state of things.

One of the reasons I take to be, that although the importance of the guns is prodigiously great when actually brought into use in earnest, they are, comparatively speaking, but seldom required at other times except as a sort of play. Were each one of our ships to come into real action once a-week, or once a-month, or even once a-year, all difficulty would vanish, and

great-gun practice would be as effectually studied as seamanship, navigation, or any other branch of our duty, the utility and urgent necessity of which are apparent at every turn of the service. There would then be no occasion for the establishment of a specific school for teaching naval gunnery. In point of fact, we know that all those ships which during the war happened to be exposed frequently to contact with the enemy did acquire insensibly, or almost without effort, that very degree of proficiency, to gain which, other ships less fortunate in their opportunities, often laboured very hard in vain. In peace, the best of all schools for naval gunnery, actual fighting, is shut up. But it does not follow that we are therefore to go on without instruction, and wait till the occasion of real service arrives before we begin to practise. It would be an awkward moment for the captain of a ship, if on running alongside an enemy, his equal or superior in force, he were conscious that this real action was to form the first artillery exercise of his people.

In teaching any practical science, half

the art consists in making the pupils sensible of the precise difficulties to be overcome. Gunnery of any kind, but especially naval gunnery, falls peculiarly under this description. The complication is also in some degree rendered more intricate by the circumstance of the pupils being grown-up persons, who, having acquired a partial or erroneous knowledge of the subject, have often almost as much to unlearn as to acquire. There will generally be found, however, in this matter what the mathematicians call a point of contrary flexure ; and when that is passed, the advance becomes most rapid, and the desire to learn augments with every fresh gulp of instruction. In fact, improvements are so readily adopted and eagerly imparted by those who are taught to estimate their advantages, that there cannot be a doubt of the popularity of the new system, when once it is fairly made known in the service at large. Who that has attended to the operations of the army in the Peninsula is not aware of the prodigious advantage in marches, in sieges, and in battles, which flowed from our possessing a highly-

trained corps of artillery? And well may Sir Howard Douglas—to whom the navy stands so much indebted for instruction on this head—ask, “Why should the improvement of naval gunnery be considered less an object of national importance than the instruction and training of our land service artillery?”

To many people it may appear a waste of time to discuss the utility of establishing a system of naval great-gun practice; but when we do occasionally find in company even professional persons treating the subject lightly, and scorning the notion of introducing afloat the nicety of shore exercise, it becomes necessary to place the subject in a broader light. I confess (and I do so with no small degree of shame), that until lately I was myself in some measure under the hurtful influence of this fallacy, and imagined that ship-firing might safely be compared to ‘shooting flying,’ and be ranked amongst the sleight-of-hand arts, to be taught only by actual sporting in the fields. I might have recollected, indeed, that as I never could hit a bird on the wing, unless by accident, or when the

keeper chanced to fire at the same moment, there might be more analogy in the cases than I dreamed of, and thence inferred that some previous instruction might have helped me to bag more game.

Without jesting, however, on matters so important to the well-being of our great proverbially national bulwark, it may not be amiss to point out a few of the difficulties and disasters which must almost necessarily attend inexperience in the day of battle on board ship.

“Nothing is so dangerous as ignorance,” says Sir Humphrey Davy; and the remark is strictly applicable to this subject; for the operations connected with the right use of the great guns are so numerous and complicated, and so essentially dependent upon one another, that unless the meaning of each be thoroughly understood, and its relation to that which precedes it and that which follows be rendered quite familiar by much practice, there can be no chance of the exact order being duly attended to. In other words, as every single evolution possesses a definite purpose, it must be undertaken

without haste or agitation, otherwise the grand object towards which our exertions are directed will inevitably be defeated. I need not say that the final purpose of all gunnery is to hit the enemy not only as hard as possible, but in those precise parts where he is most vulnerable. As this, however, is easier said than done, let us consider what must almost inevitably have taken place at the lower-deck gun of a line-of-battle ship, at which we shall suppose there were stationed a dozen or fourteen as gallant and willing fellows as ever stepped on a ship's deck, but who had not been previously trained, or whose training might have consisted in nothing beyond the mere evolutions under the eye of an officer, but accompanied by no detailed and practical explanation of their meaning.

After a few minutes' firing, the lower deck becomes so completely filled with smoke, that no one can see two yards before him ; the noise and apparent confusion swell on the unpractised senses of men who are brought for the first time into action ; and be their courage what it may, they

are apt to get so confounded, that their early, and, perhaps, their most precious fire is almost inevitably thrown away. If the men have never been taught the true value of a good aim, nor, theoretically as well as practically, instructed in the method of obtaining it, their only thought will of course be how to blaze away as fast and as indiscriminately as possible. After a certain degree of hurry-scurry, vociferation, and scrambling, the gun, we shall suppose, will be reloaded, run out, and a second time fired at random. Not to exaggerate the case, however, we may suppose the captain of the gun to look along the top of his gun, or what is called the line of metal, and fancy he is directing it point blank into his opponent's main-deck port, whereas, in fact, the gun is elevated a couple of degrees, and the shot must fly over his enemy's hull.

In short, without entering minutely into the subject, it will easily be understood, that there may arise very many evils from working the great guns of a ship with inexperienced hands. Innumerable circumstances must also occur in every

action, requiring not merely zeal, courage, and presence of mind, but actual knowledge previously acquired, and so carefully examined, as to be familiarly understood and as deliberately acted upon at the moment of need, as in a period of perfect leisure and security. It is quite obvious, indeed, that deliberation in the performance of every movement in the use of the great guns afloat, becomes only the more necessary as the danger and difficulty increase, and that precipitancy at such moments not only defeats or essentially retards the execution of our purpose, but greatly contributes to the confidence and ultimate success of the enemy. There can never be any confidence on our side, nor due deliberation, nor, consequently, much good service performed, unless, in the first place, all our efforts be grounded on a thorough knowledge of what is required to be done; and, in the second place, we have gained so complete a personal familiarity with the methods by which such knowledge is to be turned to account, that under no combination of circumstances shall we be thrown off our guard, or liable to confusion.

There are many persons who imagine that the mere jog-trot round of manual exercises will accomplish all that is requisite ; but I believe I am borne out by the authority of all officers who have enjoyed the advantage of actual experience in war, in saying that the greater part of the benefit of such exercises are thrown away, when the exact meaning and practical purpose of every evolution has not been thoroughly explained to the men who work the guns. The mere routine very soon drops into insipidity ; but when the meaning of all the movements is thoroughly understood, and the practice varied by firing with shot ; and when, moreover, each of the men is not only required in turn to give the word of command, but to explain its meaning to the others, his attention is kept fully alive, and his judgment as usefully exercised as his hands.

Up to the moment when the gun is fired off, the shot may be considered as still in the power of the captain of the gun, to use or to abuse, according to the measure of his instruction or of his ignorance. But as soon as the trigger is pulled, the

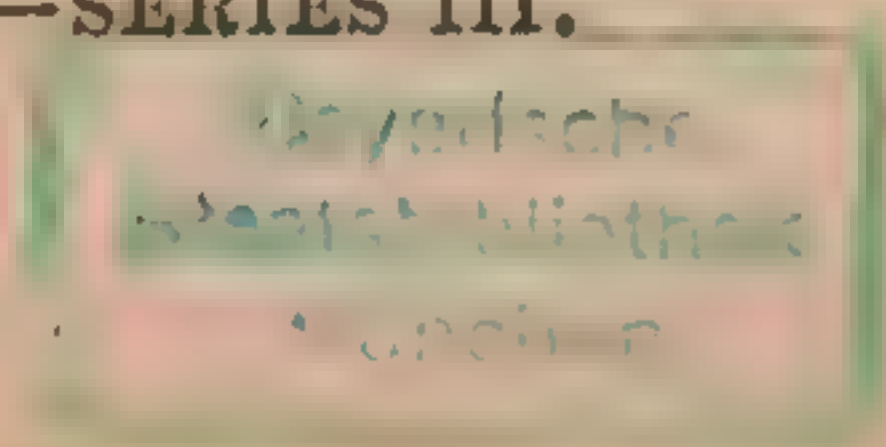
shot dashes from the muzzle, and there is no recall. If, at the moment of discharge, the seaman feels incompetent to make a right use of his power, he merely blazes away, makes an empty noise, and, because he knows no better, fails to strike his enemy. With whom, however, does the fault lie? Not surely with the poor fellow himself, whose duty it is to follow in battle the exercise he has been taught at moments of inaction. The blame unquestionably rests with his employers, who, possessing the adequate means of imparting sound knowledge to him, have not, hitherto, taken pains to diffuse it amongst those under their orders.

It may possibly be useful to remark here, in passing, that the great-gun practice on board ship differs essentially from almost every other branch of naval employment. While a knowledge of the principles upon which the rudder acts, or those by which a vessel is urged straight forwards by wind falling obliquely on the sails, is highly useful to an officer, it is seldom of importance that the foremast seamen should understand a word of these matters.

It is true they would not be the worse sailors for knowing the reason of these things ; but in the actual daily practice of sea-life, it rarely falls to their lot to be placed in circumstances where even this small degree of scientific knowledge becomes practically useful. For as they are seldom or never called upon to give the word of command in the evolutions of ordinary seamanship, no harm springs out of this degree of ignorance of cause and consequence. Another important difference is, that in the instance of sails and rudder, the trials and examples are so constantly recurring, that the laws by which they are regulated are fully acquired by practice. Not so with real gunnery, in the manipulations of which the case is totally different : for unless the men be taught the specific object of every movement, and the danger of departing from the prescribed rules, the most serious inconvenience must almost necessarily follow ; to say nothing of the waste of exertion and the ultimate loss of purpose in firing without effect.

Were a ship merely to fire her own

guns, and not be fired at in return, or were the water always smooth, and the numbers, force, and position of the enemy always the same, and were the people at the guns liable to no casualties, then, indeed, a system of unexplained routine might do very well, and the men who had been trained to load, run out, and fire mechanically, would do as well as the best-instructed artillerymen. But when a ship is liable to be well peppered with shot herself, and when the circumstances under which she may come into action are as fluctuating as the element she floats upon, or the wind which drives her about, the matter becomes of necessity very different. In truth, it is utterly beyond the reach even of the most practised experience to say when or how a ship may be engaged. She may be called into action suddenly at dead of night, or at noon-day with all leisure for preparation; in a gale of wind, or in a calm; far at sea, or on a lee-shore; she may be sailing in company with other ships, or be single-handed; full manned, or short of complement; or, lastly, she may encounter an equal, superior, or in-



ferior force. In short, as nothing can be distinctly foreseen, there can be devised no security against confusion and doubt, except the inspiring confidence of real knowledge, and the habit of deliberately applying that knowledge to actual practice.

In every other serious affair in life, men conceive it necessary to know something of what they are about before they act; but on board ship, generally speaking, the seamen have been accustomed heretofore to act as if the sole object in battle was to frighten the enemy by noise and smoke. Peg away! blaze away! was the word, while the men most interested in striking the enemy, appeared careless whether the shot hit or missed, so long as a brisk fire was kept up. This answered the purpose pretty well in very close fight, against some of the nations with whom we have had to contend, for the shot which did chance to strike proved sufficient to settle the conquest. But the result turned out differently when we came to be opposed by people who "guessed" that the game of naval warfare might be played by more than one. We then began to learn that mere

firing was worse than useless, unless our men were all taught, high and low, to understand the right management of a great gun in action ; and made to feel that this knowledge was really a national concern.

Up to the present time, this serious task has been left, as I have already mentioned, almost exclusively to the zeal, judgment, and knowledge of the individual captains of his Majesty's ships. It is very true that many excellent orders on the subject have been promulgated by the Admiralty, and detailed instructions given for the manual exercise of the crews, both at great guns and small arms. But nothing can be more certain than the failure of all these expedients in every case where the guns happened not to form the captain's hobby, or where, with the very best intentions, there happened not to be found the adequate degree of scientific knowledge to give such exercises the stamp of practical utility.

This state of things, though unknown to the country generally, and but partially admitted in the Navy, forcibly arrested the attention of those officers who had seen

much real service, and it called forth various publications on the subject. An able pamphlet was published so early as 1812, by Captain (now Sir John) Pechell, which was followed up by others; but none of these appeals, though some of them are admirable in themselves, seems to have excited the proper degree of notice, either in or out of the profession, before the work of Major-General Sir Howard Douglas on "Naval Gunnery" made its appearance about twelve years ago. The history of this publication is curious, and not a little characteristic of the country we live in.

The author, though a soldier, and a thorough-bred one, practical and theoretical, has been so much on board ship, and has mixed so constantly with naval men both afloat and on shore, that independently of his hereditary love for the sea, he has gained almost a professional degree of acquaintance with nautical affairs. His father, Sir Charles Douglas, having served as Rodney's captain of the fleet in the great battle of the 12th of April, 1782, Sir Howard very properly considered it a duty to his parent to investigate and set to rights the

controverted question as to the originality of the manœuvre known by the name of breaking the line, with which controversy Sir Charles Douglas's name had been mixed up. To enable him to enter upon such an undertaking, however, it became an essential point that he should understand the whole subject minutely; and hence, probably, the extraordinary degree of detailed nautical knowledge which he has acquired.

It was very natural that an officer whose taste lay in this direction, whose opportunities were great, and who, moreover, had been brought up in the artillery, should direct his attention to the subject of naval gunnery. The late American war gave a consistency of purpose to these speculations, and their details being modified by frequent and cordial communications with such men as Sir John Pechell and Sir Philip Broke, the work was sent to the Admiralty in manuscript so long ago as 1817. To a person who reads the book now, the only wonder is, how such an important communication should not have produced an immediate effect.

Nothing followed, however (as we learn from the preface to the first edition), but the usual official acknowledgment and thanks; and we presume the author supposed that the only remaining way to bring his views into effectual notice was through the medium of the public press, that irresistible power, which, while it is always fatal in the long-run to error and pretension, acts like fire upon fine gold, and in time purifies it to the right use and purposes of man. At all events, Sir Howard Douglas, after having, with great taste and propriety, first submitted his work to the Admiralty for the exclusive use of the service under their direction—which offer they did not think it expedient to accept—obtained their free permission to publish it to the world. The world accordingly have not been slow to take advantage of the extensive knowledge and sound practical views contained in the treatise alluded to; for it has been translated into several languages on the continent, and has been republished in America. The author has thus materially contributed to strengthen his own arguments by augmenting the

importance of those very rivalries which it formed his original purpose to resist ; and the time has now arrived when the subject can be no longer disregarded without the most imminent hazard to our national reputation.

It is said, that we are slow in England to adopt improvements ; and certainly we are most wisely slow to receive with favour every trashy scheme which crack-brained ingenuity devises. But it is contrary to fact to say, that we are remiss in the correction of errors, or the appropriation of what is good in science, or in any other branch of useful knowledge, speculative or practical. A dinning outcry is sometimes necessary to bring about the most wholesome reformatations ; but if the proposals be good in themselves, and the parties who bring them forward be truly public-spirited, their eventual adoption is quite certain. Thus we may remember the exceeding stir made about the Nautical Almanac by the astronomers of this country, who represented that even the Ephemeris of Portugal was more copious and exact than the correspondent publication in

England ! The controversy raged for a year or two with great asperity, till it was laid at rest by the government co-operating with the Astronomical Society in the formation of a body of tables, which will take the lead and preserve it as effectually as did our much-abused Nautical Almanac for so long a period, before all similar publications in Europe.

In like manner, people at last begin to understand the question of naval gunnery ; and ere long we shall certainly possess a more complete supply of seamen-gunners, and bring our ships into a more efficient state of great-gun-fighting order than any other nation, and, we trust, be enabled to maintain the lead, as heretofore, over the whole world of waters.

The present Admiralty, with the enlarged views of judicious practical statesmen, appear to have taken up the matter in a manner calculated to give the experiment suggested by Sir Howard Douglas fair play. Indeed, their measure can hardly be called an experiment, nor is the result problematical ; for it is grounded on such ample experience, that it cannot fail, if

persevered in with becoming spirit, to prove highly beneficial to the service and to the country. Little, indeed, is now proposed to be done but what has already been carried into execution by individual officers, who have had opportunities of judging of its utility in battle. The scale of the exercise, indeed, is to be enlarged, and the course of instruction made more systematic, while the whole is to be rendered uniform throughout the Navy. But nothing strictly speaking new or speculative is thought of.

The object of the establishment, of which I shall give a hasty sketch in the next chapter, is to diffuse more generally in our ships that kind and degree of knowledge of the great-gun exercise which the experience of many successful officers has pointed out to be most required in action. Until every captain, and in fact every officer and man afloat, is made well acquainted with his duty in this respect, not as a matter of mere taste or caprice, but as an imperative obligation, it will be vain to expect the re-establishment of that perfect confidence of success which always materially

contributes to its accomplishment. It must also be remembered, that this confident, undoubting reliance on ourselves, which in such matters is alternately the cause and the effect of victory, can have no steady existence, unless it be grounded upon solid knowledge ; and that, although England does possess some physical and moral advantages over other countries, which no exertion on their part can bring into the field, yet these cannot be used successfully unless we likewise take care to place ourselves at least on a par with our rivals in all other respects. It might seem invidious to advert more particularly to these intrinsic points of national superiority ; but whether they exist or not, it is quite clear that we can neither hope nor deserve to succeed, in the present state of the world, as we have done heretofore, unless, in minor matters as well as in great ones, we keep up to the average mark in the scale of nations. If we do not compete successfully in the scantling, armament, and fast-sailing of our ships—in the number, and especially in the quality of their crews—and, finally, in the precision with which

we can at all times and seasons make sure of handling the great guns, we shall scarcely be able to maintain our wonted ascendancy afloat. If, from over-confidence, or through ill-timed and injudicious economy, or any other motive, we permit ourselves to drop astern of other navies in any of these respects, we may be assured that all our parsimony and presumption will not save us from being out-matched in strength, or outwitted in tactics, when the day of trial comes.

Sir Howard Douglas's book is divided into five parts, all of which are worthy of the closest attention of naval men. A simple enumeration, however, will be sufficient to shew the importance of the work. The first part is on the organisation and training of naval gunners; the second, on the theory and practice of gunnery applied more particularly to naval ordnance. The third part, which relates to the manual exercise of the great guns, is taken from the French; but this will of course give way in a future edition to the improved system now in use amongst ourselves. The fourth part treats of the

equipment, practice, and service of naval ordnance, and contains much detailed information on the strength of gunpowder, the size of shot, and the most effectual method of pointing the great guns, so as to give the best chance of hitting the enemy. The last part, which treats of the tactics of single actions, is really a most extraordinary production to come from a landsman. Possibly naval men may differ as to some of the minor details; but there can be only one opinion as to the sound seamanship which pervades the article. At all events, it shews that this accomplished soldier has not conversed in vain with the sea-officers of his own day, and that he has proved himself a worthy descendant of Rodney's right-hand man.

All and each of the topics above enumerated, might furnish materials for expansion into popular essays on naval warfare; but for the present I shall confine myself to the first, which relates to the organisation and training of seamen-gunners.

The work of Clerk of Eldin will no doubt have occurred to the recollection of every naval reader during these discussions; for,

with all its imperfections, it must ever be looked upon as a most valuable historical memorial of many great sea-actions. With certain allowances, it may also be considered highly instructive, from shewing the causes both of our failure and of our success. It is quite needless to enter into the controversy respecting the originality of the manœuvre of breaking the line; for Sir Howard Douglas has already shewn, in the clearest and most triumphant manner, that Mr. Clerk could have been in no way instrumental, directly or indirectly, in determining Lord Rodney's movements on the 12th of April.*

Sir Howard, having now settled that point, might confer a still greater service upon the naval profession, by publishing a brief and distinct manual (independent of all controversy) of the tactics, not only of single actions, but of those in which fleets should be engaged.

* See "Naval Evolutions;" a memoir by Sir Howard Douglas, Bart. refuting Mr. Clerk's claims in relation to Lord Rodney's engagement on the 12th April, 1782. London: Boone. 1832.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW ESTABLISHMENT AT PORTSMOUTH FOR
THE INSTRUCTION OF SEAMEN-GUNNERS.

THE Admiralty have recently considered it expedient to establish a permanent corps of seamen to act as captains of guns; and they have also fitted out a ship in Portsmouth harbour, for the express purpose of affording instruction to the officers and men of his Majesty's Navy in the theory and practice of naval gunnery. By means of this establishment, it is intended that one uniform system of great-gun practice shall be communicated gradually, but with certainty, to the service at large. His Majesty's ship *Excellent*, an old line-of-battle ship, of which Lord Collingwood was captain on the 1st of June, has been appropriately selected for this purpose, and placed under the command of Captain Thomas Hastings, an officer of talents

and experience. A proportion of intelligent and active young seamen, who must not exceed thirty years of age, are to be engaged for five years, renewable at the expiration of that period, with an advance of pay, amounting to two shillings a-month for the first re-engagement, in addition to that of A. B., or any other rating they may obtain in the ships to which they are sent on leaving the Excellent. After the first five years' service, should they choose to continue longer, they will have three shillings per month additional; and at the end of the second term, on their re-entering and producing certificates of good conduct, they will be entitled to a further addition of two shillings a-month; making, in all, seven shillings per month over and above the pay of any other ratings they may hold in the ship.

There can be no doubt that, ere long, by means of this and other encouragements, a very efficient permanent corps of seamen-gunners will be collected together, and afterwards gradually distributed over the service. It is from them alone that master-gunners, gunners'-mates, and yeo-

men of the powder-room, are in future to be selected ; and it is intended that the officers and seamen of the ships into which these persons are drafted shall by them be instructed in their various duties at the guns. To entitle these men to the advantages above enumerated, they must produce a certificate from the commanding officer of the Excellent, of their proficiency and good conduct. These seamen-gunners are to be considered eligible to the situation of boatswain, also. This extension is most judicious, and one which must have sprung from a quarter well acquainted with the habits and feelings of sailors. In the formation of all such general arrangements as this system of instruction in naval gunnery, it is of primary importance to carry along with us the sympathy of those whom we wish to influence. And in the joint operation of teaching what is new and good, and unteaching what is old and erroneous, it becomes material to possess the co-operation of those leading persons in the ship who have sprung from the lower walks of the profession, and who continue to mix much with the

people, but, at the same time, are respected by them as superiors. The boatswain is strictly of this class, for he is always promoted from before the mast ; and as he ought to be the best seaman in the ship, so he is generally trusted by the crew as a standard authority. Thus there is seldom any question amongst the men about the propriety of what this officer recommends. If, therefore, he shall be only half as well versed in these matters as his brother warrant-officer the gunner, he may possess twice as much influence in rendering the new system popular on board ; and we all know how infinitely better every service is performed when it is heartily entered into.

The complement of the Excellent is two hundred men, a portion of whom are to consist of a lieutenant, three non-commissioned officers, and two privates of the marine artillery. The men are first to be instructed in what may be called the elementary-theoretical parts of their duty, such as the following : The names and uses of all the different parts of the gun and its carriage ; the meaning of the word

‘dispart,’ and how it is to be expressed in terms of linear magnitude, and also in degrees, in what way its amount is to be determined, and how applied to practice; what constitutes point-blank; what the line of metal range; and, generally, what is the effect of elevating or depressing the gun upon the range, or distance to which the shot is projected. What is meant by the term ‘windage,’ and what are likely to be the errors in direction and in the force of the projectile from this cause, which also teaches the importance of preserving shot from rust. The theory and practice of the effects of different charges of powder form important branches of the subject; and likewise the influence on the range and direction of shot by firing more than one ball at a time. Various other minor points of detail, but all of them practically useful in their way, are likewise to be taught; such as ascertaining the strength of gunpowder by actual trial, constructing signal-rockets, priming-tubes, quick and slow matches, making and filling cartridges, drying powder, choosing flints, and repairing gun-locks.

To render any such course of instruction of much utility in real service, it must be formed partly of theory and partly of practice, run together in such a way that the actual illustrations may either follow, or accompany, or, in some cases, precede the mathematical reasoning upon which the whole depends. In this view the Excellent has been fitted up with every different kind of gun, from the formidable two-and-thirty pounder of a line-of-battle ship's lower-deck to the smallest carronade which is to be fired from the bows of a boat. Every kind of lock, also, and priming tube, and sight for taking aim with, which is now in use, or which it is thought expedient to bring into the exercise, has been placed on board; and in order to give the men a habit of thinking for themselves, they are taught the true principles, as well as the use, of each of these inventions.

The master-gunners from all the ships in ordinary, and likewise from those in commission, who may come to Spithead, or enter Portsmouth harbour, or who may be ordered to fit out there, are required to repair on board the Excellent, that they

may perfect themselves in the exercises there taught, and thus be fitted to instruct the people on board their respective vessels. The captains of his Majesty's ships in commission fitting at Portsmouth are enjoined also to send a portion of their officers and crews on board to be thoroughly schooled in the system which henceforward it has been determined shall be carried into practice uniformly throughout the Navy.

It need scarcely be mentioned, that the first thing required of the seaman gunner is a perfect acquaintance with the name and use of all parts of his gun, the carriage, and every thing used in working it; great pains being taken to shew the utility of such knowledge. For example, a man is told the name and use of a certain bolt or ring, and at the same time it is explained to him, that in the event of that part of the gun-carriage being injured by an enemy's shot, he may know what to ask for in the gunner's store-room; and when he returns with it, he may know how to replace the broken bolt by the new one.

In the same careful and scientific way

the manual exercise of the great guns is taught, and the true meaning and purpose of every movement deliberately pointed out. By the manual exercise is meant the details of all those operations by which the gun is loaded, run out, pointed, and fired. This forms the second branch of instruction.

As I may advert to these points more particularly by and by, I shall merely mention, in passing, that the manual exercise includes worming and sponging out the gun preparatory to inserting the charge; taking the cartridge from the powder-man, and placing it correctly in the bore; next follows the ramming home, which requires not merely strength at the muzzle of the gun, but the employment of some skill at the breech, to discover when the cartridge has reached its proper place. This the captain of the gun determines by inserting the priming-wire into the touch-hole. The shot is next to be inserted, and due care taken that it be neither too tight, so as to jam half-way down, and thus risk bursting the gun, nor so loosely held in its place by too small a wad, that when

the ship lies over it may roll out again. The gun is then to be run out, pointed, and fired.

All these things, and many details which I have not stated—such as stopping the vent, and sponging the gun—are simple in themselves, and to unpractised eyes they often appear insignificant; but as it may be shewn that the neglect of any one of these precautions may be fatal to the success of the whole, too much pains can never be taken to demonstrate their vital importance step by step. To run out the gun, for example, requires the use of the side-tackles; but if these be not properly handled, much of their force is lost. This is easily explained to the men, who are already familiar with the use of ropes and blocks, and know, by practice at least, the mechanical advantage of a double-block over a single one. With a full crew, and fighting only one side, especially if it be the lee-side, the operation of running the gun out is abundantly easy; but when the numbers are reduced by the casualties of action, or by any other cause, or when the inclination of the deck is considerable from

the pressure of sail, it requires not only economy in the use of the men's strength, but some address in multiplying that strength by mechanical means. Again, if the vent, or touch-hole, be not carefully stopped after the gun is fired, or the sponge be not properly used, a burning piece of the old cartridge may remain, which will inflame the next charge, and probably blow away the arms of the men who are using the rammer.

There arises considerably more advantage in action from such detailed arrangements than is generally supposed; for while they in no respect interfere with the dashing courage of the master-spirits in a ship, when the moment comes for vigorous enterprise, they engage the attention and direct the exertions of persons in whom presence of mind and activity are wanting, but who may become eminently useful when properly disciplined.

To point the guns correctly, every one will understand, is an object of first-rate importance, and ought to be taught and practised not only with the greatest deliberation, but under the greatest attainable

variety of circumstances. If the gun be laid too high or too low, that is, if it be elevated so high in its aim that the shot will pass over the enemy, or be depressed so low that it will strike the water and sink into it without any ricochet, the whole labour is wasted. In like manner, if the muzzle of the gun be pointed too far to the right, or too far to the left, the path of the shot will pass a-head or a-stern of the enemy's ship. It becomes, therefore, of the highest consequence to instruct the men in the theory, as well as in the practice, of this delicate part of the process. In the act of pointing a gun, the theory of a shot's path, and the influence of the elevation of the gun upon its course, distance, and power of penetration, become so essentially parts of the exercise, that unless means be devised to explain these things clearly to the people, there is no possibility of their firing with effect in action. To speak more correctly, there is very little chance, and certainly nothing but chance, of their hitting the enemy effectually, unless the men be instructed either by long and varied experience in war (an

advantage which few can hope to be possessed of at any time), or unless they be taught to understand the joint operation of theory and practice.

Most people are aware that a gun is not so thick at the muzzle as at the breech, for the obvious reason that the greatest violence of the explosion of the powder takes place at the inner end, which must, therefore, be made proportionably strong. But few persons in any situation of life, and hardly any belonging to such an unreflecting class as sailors, will infer from this form of the gun, that the internal bore cannot be parallel to the external line drawn from the breech to the muzzle. Or, in other words, that while the axis of the bore of the gun is directed to one object, the 'line of metal,' as it is termed, or that along which the eye is carried from the 'base ring' (or thickest part) to the 'muzzle-ring,' will be directed to another object. Consequently, the person who, by using the 'line of metal,' levels a gun, as he supposes, point-blank, or directly pointed at an object which is near him, will inevitably throw

his shot clean over it; for the bore of his gun, instead of being directed straight at the object, will be elevated from one to two and a half degrees above it, according to the nature of the gun.

Sir Philip Broke, whose people had been thoroughly trained to the use of the great guns in the Shannon, engaged the Chesapeake at close quarters, and captured her in eleven minutes, chiefly in consequence of every gun being pointed, by rules, of which all his men, from long and patient instruction, perfectly understood the purpose. In a similar situation, with the same object in view, and expecting to hit the very parts of the hull which the Shannon's people knew they would strike, many other ships would have sent almost every shot in their broadside right over the enemy, instead of directly into his main deck, with such destructive effect.

Sir John Pechell, an officer of great practical knowledge, devised, on board his ship, a scheme for accomplishing one important branch of this purpose, which has been generally adopted, and serves well to explain to the seaman what is required. This in-

vention, taken in conjunction with another (which I shall afterwards explain), goes far to accomplish the practical part of the problem. Sir John prefaces the description of his contrivance by the following judicious observation, which will apply with more or less force to the whole science of naval gunnery.

“ In the first place, it is necessary to convince sailors practically, that the thing you wish to teach them is absolutely necessary ; and, therefore, until they are shewn why the line of metal will not do for a point-blank shot, as well as a line produced by ‘ disparting,’ which shall be parallel to the axis of the bore, they will not care whether they use a sight or not.”*

I must here explain, that ‘ disparting’ is a device for obtaining on the outside of the gun a line along which the eye may look in a direction parallel to the bore of the piece. A gun pointed at any mark by this line, is said to be laid point-blank.

* Observations upon the Defective Equipment of Ships’ Guns. By Captain S. John Pechell, R.N. 1824. 2d edit. 1828. 1st edit. I believe in 1812.

In practice, the process of disparting may be accomplished in various ways. The most obvious and natural of which would be, to place something on the muzzle, to spread it out as far, relatively to the bore, as the base ring or breech of the gun. But as this would be attended with inconvenience, it is usual to attach what is called a dispart, or raised piece of metal, to the second 're-inforce ring,' which is near the middle of the gun. This dispart is made to rise exactly as high as the base ring of the gun, and consequently the eye looks along a line parallel to the bore. When the eye of the person taking the aim is so placed as to bring the notch in the base ring, the top of the dispart, and the centre of the target in one line, the gun is said to be laid point-blank; and this is technically true, whether the target be below, on a level with, or above the horizontal plane.

To satisfy his sailors of this, however, Sir John Pechell had a wooden gun made, resembling in all respects, except in weight, the other guns of his ship. A small hole was then bored through the cascabel, or nob at the extreme inner end of the gun,

so that when the eye of a person standing in the rear was placed at this hole, any mark, say the centre of a target, lying directly in the line of the axis of the bore, could be seen. The object of this ingenious contrivance is to verify the previous movement, by shewing that the gun laid in the manner just described is directed straight to the white spot in the centre of the mark. But when the eye of the person pointing the gun is raised up till he can look along the external surface, or 'line of metal' (no dispart being used), the direction of his view will no longer fall on the centre of the target, but considerably below it. Thus it is demonstrated to him that the true direction of the bore of the gun is above that obtained by looking along the line of metal. If the gun is next elevated till the aimer, looking along the line of metal, or top of the piece, just sees the centre of the target, and his eye is then brought to the little hole bored through the cascabel, he will discover that the true direction of the bore is now above the mark to which it is wished to direct the gun. The proposi-

tion before enunciated, therefore, becomes manifest, that if a gun be laid at 'point-blank' by the 'line of metal,' instead of the 'disparted line,' the shot must pass over a near object.

As it is of very great consequence that this problem—the root of all artillery practice—should be distinctly understood in the outset, I shall go over the experiment in Sir John Pechell's own words.

“ I have adopted an expedient,” he says, at page 16 of his admirable little tract, “ which not only convinces the seamen of the utility of disparting the gun, but makes them quite fastidious as to its accuracy ; and it is invariably the rule, when a captain of a gun is to be instructed, to do it in the following manner. A wooden gun has been turned and mounted on a travelling carriage ; and being bored with a small auger, is disparted with an iron sight, having a rule joint of the same description as the long guns. The man to be instructed first points the gun (by the line of metal) at a fixed object inside of the ship ; he is then told to look through the bore, when he finds that his

eye is directed to an object considerably higher. But by raising the sight, which produces a line parallel to the axis of the bore, it leads to the same object as that seen through the auger-hole. It is not difficult to shew him, also, by a drawing on paper, the cause of difference between the line of metal and the bore; and by these means, each man may be taught the use of the sights, as well as to ascertain if the gun have been properly disparted."

If, with Sir John Pechell's assistance, I have succeeded in making this matter intelligible, it will be easily seen that the principle of pointing the great guns may be extended, by well-known rules, from the case of point-blank to any other given range: for the sights fitted on the top of the gun may be contrived with adjustments suited to every distance between that of point-blank, and the extreme range of the piece at the greatest elevation which the height of the port will allow of. By a proper combination of theory and actual experiment, the angle of elevation, at which every different gun will throw a shot so as to strike an object placed at

given distances, is first ascertained ; after which, the seaman, by means of the sights, which are contrived so as to carry graduated scales, can lay his gun with precision whenever the distance of the object is known. By precision, I mean that degree of accuracy of aim which will ensure the shot hitting near the place to which the sight is adjusted.

Unless, however, the gun be fired when the ship's motion has brought the object exactly to bear, as viewed along the sight, the shot will be thrown away. Practice afloat and in battle, I need hardly repeat, is by far the best method of teaching this delicate part of the process of naval gunnery ; but two devices have been hit upon as substitutes, which I have high authority for saying have been found to answer the purposes of instruction in a manner which could scarcely have been expected.

The first was invented by Sir Philip Broke, whose good fortune it was to demonstrate, by his success in actual warfare, the utility of those exercises in which he trained his people with such unwearied patience and assiduity beforehand. I find a

description of this simple method of practising men to point a gun which is in motion, in the pamphlet, already quoted ; but as this tract, I believe, is not now to be procured, I shall give it in the author's own words.

“ What I have stated about the instruction of captains of guns applies only to firing at a fixed object, supposing the ship has no motion ; but as this can seldom be the case, it is necessary, before a captain of a gun is considered fit for his station, that he should learn to fire a *flying shot*. The forecastle-gun is brought upon the quarter-deck, and a spar placed in its muzzle, with a handspike across the end. By this, two men elevate and depress the gun, thereby imitating the rolling motion of the ship. The captain of the gun then looks for his object, which is fixed at the fore part of the ship, and (always when the gun is rising) throws in the quoin, or elevating wedge, when he catches his aim. It also teaches him patience, very necessary for a sailor in action ; and by teaching him to fire when the ship is rising, keeps the object constantly in view ; con-

sequently, the man is in a great degree of preparation (before the gun is sufficiently high) to pull the trigger ; if a different mode was adopted, the gun would be pointed below the object before he could get it off." — *Captain Pechell's Observations*, p. 18. I may add, in further explanation, to those not familiar with such things, that from the moment the quoin is wedged in, the gun becomes fixed ; after which the correctness of the seaman's aim can be examined at leisure by the instructor.

Another useful method of instructing men in the important task of aiming a gun properly in sea practice is by means of an ingenious invention, known by the name of Captain Smith's movable target. This consists of a common circular mark, with rings and bull's eye, as usual, so contrived, that instead of being fixed, it can be moved up and down, and also from side to side. This is effected by means of a handle worked by a man placed behind it. The fulcrum, which is also the centre, of these motions is fitted with a ball and socket-joint, allowing a free play in every

direction as long as it is wished to keep the target in motion. All these movements can be suddenly arrested by a spring, which is disengaged the instant a cord is pulled by the man aiming the gun. The target is set up at one end of the deck, while the wooden gun already described, or a real gun if it be thought better, is placed at the other end of the ship. The cord connected with the target is made long enough to come so far aft as to be within reach of the captain of the gun's hand, and being led through a ring attached to the lock, he pulls it the moment he conceives his gun to bear on the bull's eye, precisely as he would do the lanyard of his lock, were he actually firing. The gun, I should have mentioned, is first brought nearly to the mark by means of training, and by elevating or depressing its muzzle. It is then allowed to remain fixed till the person who is pointing it sees the bull's eye of the target come across his line of sight; at that instant he pulls the string, and the target stops.

One of the great advantages of this contrivance is, the power which it gives to the

person superintending the exercise to examine the accuracy of the aim ; for as the target is suddenly fixed in its place, and the gun likewise remains stationary, either the officer, or the captain of the gun himself, at his leisure, can discover how near he has come to the mark, and in what direction the tendency of his error lies. Perhaps, however, the chief merit of this, and every other device for teaching the art of pointing sea artillery, is the absolute necessity of deliberation which it inculcates, by proving to the seamen, that unless they really use patience and acquire the habit of taking great care, they will never hit their enemy except by mere chance. Uninstructed sailors are universally observed to have no object in their minds, but to fire away as hard as ever they can — careless of ‘new-fangled gimcracks,’ as they call the only methods by which success can be secured ! The consequence is, that, in such cases, almost all the shot fired are wasted ; and if the enemy’s crew have been duly trained beforehand, and their ship be well managed in other respects, the battle may be lost to us, in spite of our having

fired three or four times as often as our antagonist—with this difference, that nine in ten of his shot may have hulled us, while nine in ten of ours have missed him.

After all, then, the point of greatest importance in any system of naval gunnery, is the unceasing inculcation and the habitual exercise of the coolest deliberation—a quality unspeakably more important than rapid firing. If, indeed, quick and correct firing could be conjoined, it would be idle to talk of limiting the celerity of the practice; but as experience goes to prove that but a small proportion of all the shot fired in any action take effect, it becomes of much greater moment to fire seldom, but with precision, than frequently and at random. In fact, the best kind of training would be that which should teach the men to consider it irksome and disgraceful to make a blustering noise to no purpose, and at the same time should convince them of the paramount importance of taking such careful aim before pulling the trigger, that not a single shot should ever miss. Under the most favourable circumstances, even in a still harbour,

this is not easy ; while, at sea, though the surface be not rough, the difficulty is immensely increased ; and if darkness, smoke, violent motion, and the awkward intrusion of the enemy's shot, be superadded, the embarrassment to unpractised officers and men becomes so great, that much efficient service of the guns cannot be reckoned upon. These, however, are the golden moments for well-disciplined and well-exercised crews to take advantage of. For such circumstances must insure the triumph of whichever party has learned his business so thoroughly as to see his way clearly in the midst of a confusion terrific to his antagonist, who has not learned the value of systematic coolness and deliberation.

With respect to the interesting experiment now under course of trial at Portsmouth, on board the *Excellent*, I shall merely state, that after the manual exercise has been completely learned both by officers and men, those who are found thus qualified are advanced to the next stage—that of firing with powder—then to that of firing at a mark with shot, and

otherwise handling the gun exactly as they would do in real action. Care is taken throughout these exercises to vary the duties of the men at the gun, so that each in his turn may be called upon to shew his proficiency in every one of the duties, from that of the captain of the gun to that of the powder-man. All, therefore, are taught, not only to obey the word of command, but to give it, and also to explain succinctly the meaning of the terms used, and to require similar explanations from the other men. I need not add, that many useful experiments are tried, with guns of various calibres, with different charges of powder, at different degrees of elevation, with more than one shot, and so on, in order to render the minds of the men familiar with as many as possible of those cases which are likely to arise.

In connexion with these practical manipulations, a course of mathematical study is chalked out for the young gentlemen, under a well-qualified instructor, who mingles not with his pupils, but with the officers, as he ought always to do, and who enables them to proceed in the theory of

these matters, along with the real practice. The seamen-gunners also have been encouraged to improve themselves in such branches of knowledge as lie within the range of their capacity, without being foreign to their habits. It is something new to a sailor to make calculations ; and although his task be sufficiently elementary, it seems indispensable to the utility of his performance that it should be well understood. The rules for disparting a gun require some knowledge of figures, for the elevation is expressed in degrees and minutes. The length of the range or flight of a shot before it touches the water, compared with the elevation, weight of the ball, and the initial velocity, is a problem that cannot be understood without some study. If, moreover, from this body of trained seamen the master-gunners and boatswains of our ships are in future to be selected, it becomes of still greater consequence that they should all be taught to read and write, and have a competent knowledge of arithmetic. It is, indeed, wonderful how eagerly and how soon the men acquire a perception of the importance

of acting by theoretical rules in the use of their guns. When, for instance, they have once learned that the path of a cannon ball is never straight, they are impatient to discover what course it would follow in vacuo, and what course it actually does take through the air.

Lord Nelson's characteristic maxim of getting so close alongside of your enemy that no shot can miss, is still, unquestionably, by far the best standing rule for naval gunnery. But these close quarters cannot always be gained ; and in many circumstances—such as that of bad weather at sea—may not be desirable. Neither, perhaps, will your enemy permit this near approach. On the contrary, we must act upon the supposition of his being often able to choose and preserve the distance most favourable to himself ; and we should know beforehand, in every case, what steps we ought to take in order to bring him to our terms, instead of allowing him to dictate the terms to us. The old custom of firing a shot ‘ to try the distance,’ is unworthy of the present times, and he who acts by such a groping rule will be sure

to fail. In fact, no shot ought ever to be fired till the distance be tolerably well known; nor is there any good reason for wasting a single discharge. If sights be fitted to the guns, and the men be properly instructed in their use, this need never happen. “But,” Sir Howard Douglas judiciously remarks, “I am persuaded that ‘instrumental sights,’ which admit of nice adjustment corresponding to different elevations, intrusted to the handling of untrained men, would frequently occasion the most serious consequences. Action may commence at considerable distances, which may rapidly lead to close battle; but should corresponding alterations not be made in the original adjustment of the sights for long ranges, what may not be the consequence?”*

This is so very obvious, that the argument for establishing a regular course of instruction for training naval gunners—now that our guns are fitted with sights—is irresistible. But an essential part of this training, as I have before said, must

* Sir H. Douglas on Naval Gunnery, 2d edition, p. 226.

consist in teaching the men, first, what is the real path of a shot ; and, secondly, in shewing them how to lay their gun and fire it, so that the shot may strike the part required, however wide of the mark the gun may, to ignorant eyes, appear to be directed. Now, it is clear, that if the class to which an enemy's ship belongs be known, the height of her masts is known also pretty nearly ; and thence, by a very simple process, her distance may be discovered. An angle taken with a quadrant by one of the midshipmen would settle this point at any moment. With this datum, the guns may be directed point blank at certain parts of the enemy, with a certainty of hitting others which lie lower ; for this is a matter, not of chance, but of mathematical calculation. On this principle Sir Howard Douglas has computed several tables, adapted to the use of different kinds of ordnance, shewing what parts of the mast ought to be aimed at, in order to strike the hull, at whatever distance the ships may be from one another. Thus, for example, if a large frigate, with a long 24-pounder on

her main deck, which is raised, say nine feet above the water, wishes to strike the hull of another first class frigate distant two hundred and ninety-seven yards, the gun may be laid point blank, that is, with the axis of the bore directed straight to the part intended to be struck ; or, which will insure the same thing, by the captain of the gun using the dispart sight parallel to the bore. If the distance, however, be seven hundred and ninety yards, and the same dispart sight be used, the gun must be directed not to the hull, but, by help of the dispart, point blank to the main-yard—the calculation having shewn that, in the time the shot takes to fly so far, it will have fallen through the height of the main-yard above the hull, which height is equal to the natural tangent of the angle of elevation, in terms of the distance as radius ; and thence the term *Tangent Practice* for this method of firing. There are two objections to its use which it may be useful to consider, not merely on their own account, but on that of the general question of instructing seamen in the science of naval gunnery.

In the first place, it may be objected to this mode of firing, that it implies a knowledge of the distance ; but Sir Howard Douglas has very adroitly escaped from that difficulty, by reminding us that a knowledge of the distance is not more material in this case than in the ordinary practice, where the sights are supposed to be altered from time to time as the distance varies. And he quotes high naval authority—that of Sir Philip Broke—for the opinion, that, with people not well trained to the intricacies of elevation, the practice of naval ordnance might be simply and uniformly conducted by general orders, given from time to time, indicating the aims that should be taken either with the point-blank sight, or with the line of metal, as the case might be. (See Sir H. Douglas's Tables XX. to XXIII. and Articles 171 to 181 inclusive.)

The tangent sights of Congreve and Millar have been devised for the very same purpose ; so that the gun may at once be raised as many degrees as are required to hit any part of a ship, provided, as before, the distance be known.

The second objection, which it may be useful to meet, respecting all varieties of what is called tangent practice, viz. aiming at a high object in order to strike a lower one, is, that it involves observations and computations too nice for the agitating period of action, and that, under any circumstances, it is too refined for the comprehension of seamen. I grant that, for the comprehension of ignorant and uninstructed seamen, it is much too refined ; but I cannot suppose that any seaman, of ordinary capacity, who should have ever pitched a cricket-ball from his hand, or ascertained, by actual experiment, that a shot aimed at the main-yard of a ship, at a certain distance, always struck the hull, would not be anxious to learn what were the other points he should aim at, to accomplish the same purpose at different distances.

With respect to the difficulty of making the requisite observations in time of action, it may be remarked, that unless some kind of estimate be formed of the distance, either by the officer in command or by the men at the guns, and the practice be regu-

lated accordingly, the whole affair becomes a matter of chance. It is worth considering, therefore, whether it be wiser to let each man guess at the distance, and blaze away hap-hazard, or to let the head and director of the whole first determine the distance by means which are infallible, or as nearly so as the case will admit of, and then issue orders from time to time from the quarter-deck, regulating the angle at which the guns are to be elevated in conformity to such observations.

As to the difficulty of making the requisite computations in the heat of action, there seems nothing in this ; for the whole may be made leisurely at any other time. They are all capable of being reduced to the compendious form of a table, which may be used without difficulty in the hottest fight, by any man possessing that degree of coolness, without which his exertions are useless, and the due degree of deliberation on the part of his people impossible. It ought also, undoubtedly, to be made the exclusive and specific occupation of some one officer to ascertain the enemy's distance during the action. The captain's duty,

then, as at all times, is to do little or nothing himself, but to see every thing done properly. If he performs this office fully, he will always have enough to attend to without personally occupying himself with details.

Finally, it may be remarked, that as there is no season in which the magical effects of good discipline are more decidedly exhibited than in times of danger and difficulty, so there is none in which superior knowledge, and its attendant confidence, imparts to others their animating spirit with more certainty. It is at such trying seasons, that the electric spark of a great and generous example tells throughout a ship's company, and that an officer of experience, courage, and talents, makes his ascendancy be felt, reaps the rich harvest of his previous care, and overpays himself a thousandfold for all his past anxieties. It is then, also, that a less vigilant officer may be forced to recollect, with shame and remorse, the golden opportunities he has neglected of improving his people in those exercises which it is now too late to employ with effect.

It may be useful to consider, that exactly in proportion as the intricacies and dangers of the service increase, so will the value of previous instruction generally become manifest, not merely in giving certainty of purpose to every evolution, but in imparting that degree of steadiness and deliberation, without which there can be no success, while there may often ensue much personal as well as national discredit.

It would be easy to cite instances from our naval history to prove the fatal effects of neglecting this important part of naval science. But the task would be invidious. A more pleasing office would be to shew the astonishing success which has attended the right use of the weapons in our hands. It is well known that in Sir William Hoste's celebrated action in the Adriatic, more damage was done to the enemy as they came down, by the slow and deliberate firing of well-aimed single guns, from the main-deck of his ship, the *Amphion*, than a dozen ordinary broadsides would have produced.

Before quitting the subject of sea-fight-

ing, it may be useful to suggest, that perhaps not half enough use has hitherto been made of musketry in ship actions. It seems clear, that if twenty expert marksmen were distributed about a frigate in action, and instructed to fire into the enemy's ports, the efficiency of his great guns would be seriously interfered with.

A very able brother-officer of mine, who paid great attention to this branch of his duty during the war, and often proved the value of such study, writes to me on the subject of musketry-practice in sea-fights, in a style so graphic and instructive, that I shall quote his own words :—

“ Cut a man out of a bit of wood, size of life ; paint him like a French soldier ; fit a head for him, formed of an iron hoop and a piece of canvass, and let this ship on and off the body ; take care, of course, to make his face very fierce, with mustaches, &c. Stick this figure up in the jolly-boat, which you may tow astern at any distance most convenient ; and, after a few weeks' practice, you will not be able to make heads fast enough for your Frenchman !”

It is satisfactory to know, that it forms an essential part of the instruction on board the Excellent, to train the men to the use of small arms as well as the great guns ; and if, as I hope, we shall soon see rifles with percussion-locks introduced into the Navy, the efficiency of our ships of war will be much increased in the day of battle.

CHAPTER V.

ON MANNING THE NAVY IN TIME OF WAR.

To pretend that there is no evil in impressment would be nearly as unreasonable as to assert that there is no evil in pain, in poverty, or in war itself. But I deny that the evils incident to any of these calamities are unmixed or incapable of alleviation. At all events, I hold it to be philosophical as well as business-like to look such things fairly in the face. And we ought always to consider two things ;—first, how far the practical mischief really extends, what is its nature, and how far it is capable of remedy in itself ; and, secondly, how much, and by what means, the most good can be extracted from those parts of the evil which are admitted to be irremediable. It may be all very well for those philanthropic individuals who have no responsibilities to

entangle them, and nothing to lose by changes, nor any actual duties to perform, to sit at their ease in their snug closets at home and find fault with matters abroad. But much mischief may often be done to the cause of real humanity by such ill-judged declamations as we too frequently hear from persons demonstrably ignorant of many of the most important bearings of such subjects.

A distinguished professional writer (Admiral Sir Charles Penrose), when treating of another strongly controverted point, expresses himself in terms with which every candid person must agree. Alluding to some popular orators of the day, he says, "The mischief which these persons complain of is evident, but the means which they use for the attainment of an assumed good are wholly at variance with such proposed intention of remedying the evil. I am always more ready," he continues, "to ascribe mistakes in such cases to an erroneous judgment than to a mischievous design. But if those who choose to assume a superior degree in the scale of humanity, or hope to gain a higher step

on the tottering ladder of ill-founded popularity, will bring such subjects into public notice, they ought surely to take the pains to be well informed; and yet I venture to assert, that those who have publicly advocated the abolition of the power of inflicting corporal punishment, have spoken in great ignorance both of cause and effect; and as these gentlemen are by no means devoid of talent, they must stand guilty of a very serious fault in having brought forward a subject so likely to inflame the minds of our seamen, and to render them discontented, without procuring all the information in their power through proper channels.”*

The admiral, in the above extract, does not expressly allude, indeed, to impressment, but his admirable pamphlet, coming as it does from one of the most benevolent of men, and most efficient as well as successful of officers, is worthy of attentive perusal by every person who takes an active part in such discussions. The whole of his

* Observations on Corporal Punishment and Impressment. Pp. 1 and 2. London, 1824.

remarks, however, apply with equal force to the subject of impressment, and in fact are afterwards so used in his work. In all such questions it is of primary importance to distinguish between what is desirable and what is possible, or between what is quite beyond our reach, and what may perhaps be accomplished by our exertions. If we lose sight of these distinctions, we inevitably waste our time by missing the points we might hope to hit if we chose to aim aright; and, again, we often do mischief by striking where we should wish not to interfere, and thus too frequently aggravate the evils we desire to remedy.

Some officers, I understand, are of opinion that impressment may in time be entirely done away with. I confess I have scarcely any hopes, nor can I understand how such an expectation can seriously be entertained by those professional persons who take all the bearings of the case into consideration. A few of the circumstances may be alluded to as forming obstacles which no ingenuity I conceive will ever be able entirely to remove. On the

breaking out of a war, when it becomes absolutely necessary to the safety of the country, and for the protection of the national property, that a large fleet of line-of-battle ships and frigates should be manned and equipped immediately, it seems altogether hopeless to expect that any amount of bounty, or other stimulus, will suddenly induce seamen to leave the merchant service and repair to the men of war at the moment of need. If it be maintained that such an expectation is not ill-founded, practical men are entitled to ask for some proof, some experience of a voluntary disposition so contrary to the ordinary habits of the persons we are speaking of. The only resource which can be even imagined to supply the place of impressment on any such sudden emergency is to keep a large fleet permanently afloat, ready to act on the breaking out of a war. That is, to maintain in peace a body of twenty or thirty thousand seamen and officers, and ten or fifteen thousand marines, as in the case of the army, sufficient at all events to repel the attempt of an invader, or the ravaging attacks of several

squadrons sent out by an active enemy to destroy our shipping and burn our mercantile seaports. London, Cork, Dublin, Liverpool, and Glasgow—not to mention several of our naval arsenals themselves—might readily be demolished before twenty sail of the line could be manned by all the gold in the Bank of England, without impressment.

Again, it may become absolutely necessary for the salvation of our national independence, to gain suddenly and by force from the merchant service into that of the Navy a large accession of fresh strength, after a general action has been fought abroad, or even after some extensive sickness has occurred on board a fleet near or in the presence of an enemy; but I have never heard of any means by which this purpose can be accomplished with that certainty which may become absolutely essential to the preservation of the national honour, and the security of the millions upon millions of property so frequently at hazard in war, which is sure to be sacrificed, if the paramount efficiency of the fleet should be diminished. What is true

on the grand scale, when large fleets, and the whole line of coast round Great Britain and Ireland are considered, is not a whit less true, except in degree, in the case of single ships, whose duties may be limited to the defence of a convoy. It has been my fortune to serve in men-of-war abroad, when, from illness and other causes, the crew has been so much reduced that we could hardly have engaged a ship of equal nominal force with much hope of success, without adopting the method of impressment, under circumstances when no conceivable voluntary motive would have been powerful enough to have remanned us.

I beg it will be borne in mind that I do not deny the great evil, the hardship, even the occasional injustice and cruelty of this practice; but thinking, as I conscientiously do, on this subject, I must not shrink on these accounts from stating what, in spite of all this, I believe to be absolutely essential to the well-being of the Navy, and the honour and safety of the country at large. Nor do I despair of shewing that even the seamen themselves, though they be the chief and imme-

diate sufferers, are by no means the persons least benefited by the results of the present system in the long run.

I admit, of course, that it is our bounden duty to render impressment as little necessary as possible. But surely the most obvious way to diminish this necessity would be to render the naval service generally popular in itself; and assuredly a great deal has been done of late years towards effecting such an object. This desirable consummation, however, is easier wished for than fully accomplished. That we shall ever be able to render thoroughly popular at all times a service which must inevitably be often highly disagreeable and laborious in many of its parts, is a vain and idle expectation. But we may do a great deal to render it less justly unpopular, and to attach firmly and permanently to it a far greater number of its very best servants than we can now command. By such means as I allude to, we may likewise ensure for all our ships, under ordinary circumstances, even in war time, an adequate supply of hands without impressment; and when such sudden exigencies

arise as have already been alluded to, requiring the adoption of that painful alternative, we may have the satisfaction of thinking that we have at all events reduced the evil to its lowest degree, by contributing every thing in our power to soften the asperity of our coercive employment of the labour of others.

Before considering what measures have recently been adopted, or might still be adopted with advantage, to render the service more popular amongst the seamen, I must mention one point which most people on shore, and even some naval officers, take too little into account: it is, that the merchant seamen themselves, and seamen generally, do not by any means look upon their liability to impressment as any such very grievous hardship as it is presumed they do. They have long complained, and with justice, that after being impressed, they were not dealt with fairly; and there is still some reason, though much less than formerly existed, in these complaints. But this is totally another affair from their objecting to impressment, which I am convinced is not

in itself viewed by the sailors in the light supposed by many persons. From the hour they go to sea as boys in a merchant vessel, they become familiarised with the probability, I may almost say certainty, of being impressed into his Majesty's service ; all their measures are taken in that expectation, and the risk I speak of enters into the calculation of their parents as well as their own throughout their whole career. It is indeed alleged that many lads are prevented from becoming sailors by the fear of impressment. I do not believe this ; at all events, I do not imagine that more boys are deterred from going to sea by this apprehension than are scared from it by the dangers of shipwreck or battle. I do not deny that sailors do all they can to avoid being pressed into the Navy, or that the risk does not influence them in their demand for wages in the merchant service. Beyond a doubt, it directs their line of employment, and becomes a part and parcel of all their thoughts, conversation, and habits ; but, practically speaking, it influences their happiness no more than the possible evils of the yellow fever,

or the chances of a French prison. I do not say that, abstractedly speaking, this lessens the injustice of taking a fellow-subject and free man from an occupation he prefers, to another which he dislikes, and making him labour for smaller wages than he might perhaps earn were he left alone. I wish to blink no part of this question. An argument that will not stand such shot is not worth defending. I pretend not that we have strict or abstract reasoning on our side, but simply, that in practice we find a system established, which, in certain respects, works admirably—which is vitally essential to our well-being as a nation, until a substitute shall be found, but for which no substitute has yet been proposed that seems practicable—while this system, in the apprehension of those most concerned, the seamen, is, in fact, looked upon as one of those evils which belong naturally and inevitably to the profession of their free choice. I verily believe they consider it no more capable of correction, than that the troubled nature of the element upon which they have made their election to pass their lives can be rendered smooth.

Thus, a boy chooses to become a sailor in the merchant service ; he is warned of the risk of impressment ; his mother descants on the chances of being cast away, or of being killed in battle ; he laughs at all these things, and says he will take his chance. He therefore goes to sea, and, with his eyes open through life, he still chooses, all things considered, to incur these varied risks. The advantages, in short, predominate, in his opinion, over the evils. The life is to his taste ; he objects not to the excitement of danger, and he perseveres.

Every other profession whatsoever has, in like manner, its numerous drawbacks as well as its advantages, and that of the sea is by no means an exception to the rule ; nor, upon the whole, does there seem any reason to suppose that the sailors themselves consider it, comparatively, a bad profession, even when they take into account all the evils of impressment.

To compensate for a certain degree of the loss of liberty, the naval service has very many advantages over that of the merchant service. But, even at the worst,

it may well be questioned whether people on shore, in the same rank of life as sailors, do in fact enjoy more, or even so much, real liberty, or many higher advantages in other respects, than are enjoyed by our men-of-war sailors. Still less do seamen on board merchant ships enjoy more real liberty. I believe that few of any description of the labouring classes are so well off as sailors; and assuredly the tasks of merchant seamen and labourers on shore are harder, and their comforts vastly inferior to those of naval sailors. At all events, I feel quite sure, that the crew of a tolerably well-regulated ship in his Majesty's service, consisting, we shall suppose, exclusively of pressed men, would scorn to exchange situations with any equal number of their labouring fellow-citizens on shore—I mean of those born to the same expectations. This, surely, is the true and only business-like way of viewing the question. For the comforts of sailors are, generally speaking, and especially in the Navy, much greater than those of labourers on shore. The treatment they receive is less irksome;

they visit the whole world ; and, as I shall endeavour to shew, they may with advantage be permitted almost always to enjoy many of those luxuries most suited to their tastes and habits. Of these, the labourer on shore enjoys few or none. What is more to the purpose, the sailors are not only happy in themselves, but admit the fact. I do not say this is invariably the case. We are not angels, but men ; and all climates are not like those between the tropics ; nor is the service of blockading Toulon for twenty months at a stretch, without dropping the anchor, so agreeable as cruising amongst the Azores, and catching up prizes by the dozen ! But, by and by comes the glorious delight—the master luxury of such a battle as Trafalgar, which compensates in three hours for three years of dodging off and on, watching fellows afraid to shew their noses till shovelled out by the orders of Napoleon, only to get smashed to pieces by Nelson. This reminds me of Greenwich Hospital for our wounded warriors, and our pensions for those veterans who have served their country faithfully—to say nothing of Haslar during

sickness, and a hundred other advantages of which the merchant service has none.

These opinions, though by no means singular, are not, I grant, universally held by officers; but I positively declare that I have never yet been able to learn from the seamen themselves, that, all things considered, the total abolition of impressment is looked upon by them as desirable. Every reflecting man amongst them—and these are far more numerous than we are apt to suppose—is, I really believe, perfectly convinced, that as the nation, at moments of exigency, is obviously entitled to the services of every one of its subjects, seamen inclusive, the country cannot possibly do without impressment, and that this power never can, and never will, nor ought to be given up. Men, therefore, who embark in any of the various departments of the profession of the sea, do in point of fact, and must continue to take this contingency into account as one of the hardships of their calling, and be prepared to meet it like cold, wet, fatigue, and the numberless privations incident to their rugged occupation. Since the im-

provements of modern years have been introduced, the unpopularity of the Navy has been gradually abating; and I am strongly persuaded, that, at this moment, it lies within our power to render the naval service permanently popular; or, to speak cautiously, to render it, gradually, less unpopular; and thus, of course, to render impressment less and less of an evil in real practice, as well as in appearance, whatever it may remain in abstract theory.

That this is the true method of discussing such a question, I should hope would be conceded by all who sincerely wish to do good, without any ostentatious ambition of being thought more philanthropic than their neighbours. If the existence of this evil be essential to our national safety, that is, if, upon some occasions, we must have recourse to the impress, to avoid evils ten times more serious,—let us at least manfully gird up our loins for the only fair exertion that remains to men of business to consider. Let us see what can be done to remove practical obstacles to improvement, and to dislodge, or, at all

events, to sap, those well-founded objections to the naval service which admit of alteration, without at the same time risking what is essential to its efficiency and the safety of the country. To attempt more is to work at the wrong end, and in the wrong spirit. Lamentable, indeed, to our naval honour and national independence will be the consequences, immediate and remote, if, in these days of political experimenting and headlong change, when people fondly hope to perform in a few months the work of as many centuries, we shall rashly part, on a sudden, with our long-established power of impressment. Before we venture upon such a measure we must devise a substitute; and the true substitute I take to be, the introduction, gradually, of those ameliorations into our naval system which alone, in the opinion of experienced practical men, afford a fair ground for hoping that voluntary service may in time take the place of impressment. Any sudden and uncompensated alteration in the method of manning the fleet, at the breaking out of a war, will be made at prodigious cost to the

nation, not merely in money, but in that which money cannot buy—national renown, and its consequent security. A return to the old system—too hastily abandoned—will then be our only salvation; but the fearful danger is, that when once the sanction of established usage has been broken in upon, the materials of which it was formed will be found not merely separated—they will have been annihilated. The complicated web of old customs, which, when entire, is irresistibly strong, will fall instantly to pieces when a single mesh is cut. Unfortunately, to reweave such a system will require an equal length of time; or if the urgency be great, its re-establishment must necessarily be accomplished at the expense of tenfold irritation to the parties who have been thus busily instructed in the mysteries of their own strength of resistance. Even when the seamen held in their hands the power almost of dictation, (I allude to the great mutinies of the Nore and Spithead), they never once dreamed of the abolition of impressment. To talk, therefore, of that as a flagrant abuse

requiring immediate and total correction, which the parties most interested look upon as an evil incapable of absolute remedy, so long as England is an island and her trade extends over the whole world—is, to say the least of it, an officious sort of humanity. But when, in addition, it appears very probable, that, by the abolition of the power of impressment, the evil would not be removed but speedily aggravated, the imprudence of such meddling is enormously increased.

It signifies little or nothing to say that the Americans have not resorted to impressment. The small number of their ships, and the shortness, as well as popularity of the war in which they were engaged, together with the entire stoppage of their commerce, rendered the practice unnecessary. But that vigorous-minded nation will not be deterred by any abstract injustice in the matter, or feel the smallest scruple, we may be well assured, in adopting the only method by which, when the occasion shall require it, a large fleet can be suddenly equipped for sea.

It is far more agreeable, and, I trust,

likely to be more useful in practice, to leave these irritating and debateable branches of the subject for the grateful consideration of those improvements in our system, in the object and principle of which all men are agreed—however much diversity may exist amongst officers and other persons who have given their attention to these things, as to the best method of accomplishing purposes admitted to be so eminently desirable.

It may be useful, however, first to take a glance at the existing state of the evil, that we may see how far the circumstances are different from those which we have had to contend with in times past. For if these be essentially changed, it is not enough to say that in former wars the impressment answered its purpose, and worked well in the long run, by enabling us to annihilate the fleets of all our antagonists. Even if it were so, and we could reckon upon accomplishing as great things in future, by the assistance of the impress, as we have done heretofore, still, every person who is acquainted with the details must wish that an evil, which rests exclu-

sively on a deserving class of the community, should be alleviated to the utmost extent of our means. But this obligation becomes still more imperative upon us, when the effect of time has been to change many of the circumstances so materially, that it may be very much doubted if the power in question can be relied upon to any safe extent in the event of future wars. I mean, without some modification in itself, and some material collateral adjustments, to fit the whole to the altered state of the times. The materials are the same, and the importance of employing them is the same. Sailors are sailors still, and, in almost all their leading characteristics, are likely to continue unchanged ; and as long as our national position is insular at head-quarters, but our dependencies, spread over the whole globe, are kept in communication by the broad high way of the ocean, we must, in order to preserve our national character—not to say existence—never fail to recollect, that it is chiefly to armed fleets that we can look for our own defence, and that of the colonies, which it is in the highest degree

unwise to consider in any other light than as integral parts of the empire.

The question, then, of manning, equipping, and maintaining at sea in proper efficiency the requisite number of ships of war, not only to guard our own shores, but to keep the course clear for the race of our commerce, is one of the most momentous that can well occupy the attention of statesmen, as well as of professional persons. And it seems to form an essential part of the duty of persons who have attended to the subject, to point out to public attention those features of the case which experience has taught them are deserving of careful examination.

In addressing myself to this subject, which on many accounts may well be called terrific, I feel no small degree of embarrassment, and, I must add, of apprehension. My diffidence, however, on this occasion, arises not from any distrust of the correctness of the views which I have learned to entertain, or any doubt of the efficacy of the means which have been proposed to meet the occasion, but solely from an apprehension that I may not do

justice to the subject in the expression of those opinions. In discussing incidentally a topic of such great extent, and in some of its most important details so strictly technical, in a manner likely to be intelligible to general readers, many things must of necessity be altogether left out, or only touched upon slightly, which, in the opinion of other persons, ought to have been considered at length. And yet, unless a pretty comprehensive view be taken of the points at issue, and at the same time many of the details be well understood, there can be little hope of the subject meeting fair play, either from those who are conscious of knowing and caring little about the matter, or from those who, without perhaps much more information than their neighbours, have already made up their minds to view it in a particular manner.

As a professional man, who has paid some attention to these matters, I feel extremely unwilling to let slip an opportunity of placing a subject of first-rate national importance in what I conceive to be its true light, difficult and painful though the task may be. Were its evils

quite hopeless, and the palliatives, if not remedies, placed so far beyond the reach of practical application that none but a visionary could reckon upon a cure, it would be equally wicked and absurd to expose the misery of impressment. But when, in the opinion of some of the best-informed professional authorities, an obvious course of improvement lies before us, striking indirectly, but vigorously, at the very root of the evil, the difficulty is greatly diminished.

I am not sure that in what I have to say any thing very new will be advanced ; but I shall be satisfied if I can condense the most material parts of what has been so ably stated at length by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Penrose and Captain Griffiths, whose pamphlets on impressment, corporal punishments, and other subjects connected with seamanship and naval economy, I cannot too strongly recommend to officers of every age and rank in the service.*

* Observations on Corporal Punishment and Impressment, by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Penrose, K.C.B. 1824.

Impressment fully considered, with a view to its

These writers appear agreed, that impressment, or rather the power to impress seamen, cannot safely be given up, since certain occasions may arise when there would not be time to wait for the means of national defence afforded by volunteering men for the Navy. Actual invasion, or the expectation of it—the destruction of a fleet—the imminent hazard of our colonies or commerce—and several other possible cases may occur, in which the safety of the country demands the promptest measures; and then, of course, the few must yield to the many. Unhappily, however, we cannot deny, that from a variety of circumstances, a great disinclination, and, in some instances, a disgust to the naval service, has arisen amongst merchant seamen, which it is of vast importance to counteract, and, if possible, altogether to remove. But to eradicate such prejudices requires a considerable time; and they never will be

gradual Abolition, by Capt. Anselm John Griffiths, R.N. 1826. Also, Observations on some points of Seamanship, with practical Hints on Naval Economy, by Captain Griffiths. 1828. 2d edition.

shaken unless the groundwork of discontent upon which they rest be taken away. Then, and not till then, the gradual operation of experience will commence. And if proper improvements, adopted in the genuine spirit of fairness to the seamen, be persevered in with perfect good faith, there can be little doubt of their inspiring eventually that degree of mutual confidence which has been so much wanted. The superior comforts and advantages of the Navy, even now, above those of the merchant service, are very considerable; but their attraction is nearly overpowered by forces pulling in an opposite direction. It is the chief purpose of the present inquiry to investigate these retardations or impediments to the smooth working of our system, with a view to their removal; or, which would be better still, to the application of these forces to the right purpose, so that they may act with us instead of against us.

There is reason to suppose that it will be far casier for seamen to evade the impress in the event of war than it used to be in former times. The independence of

the United States was the first circumstance which materially changed our position in this respect; and of late years the rapid growth of commerce on the other side of the Atlantic has given facilities to our seamen to escape from the impress, for which the right of search, however enforced, affords but a small compensation. No one who has not served on the coast of North America can have an adequate idea how effectual an asylum is afforded by the common origin and a common language, as well as similarity of manners, to persons who have a strong love of change. Sailors, indeed, are so much accustomed to rove over the world, that they have little scruple about expatriating themselves, and they are too often indifferent about the means by which the requisite subterfuges may be effected. The angry recriminations and interchange of mutual bad offices between the Americans and us, which led to the last bitter war, gave that nation a still higher interest in rendering their country a place of refuge for our seamen; and it has now, from one cause and another,

become a matter of the utmost ease for any seaman to protect himself falsely by the immunities of an American-born citizen. All this, which, of course, renders impressment a much less effectual means of supply, only makes it of more importance to us to fall upon methods of manning our ships, as much as possible, without the instrumentality of such a practice.

How far we may insist upon exercising the right of search on board American ships, and those of other nations, when we come again to require men,—or how long those countries may submit to it, without bringing the matter to the issue of war, are questions difficult to answer. But one thing seems clear, that every such search must now be exercised with greater moderation than formerly, and must in every view prove less efficient as a means of procuring seamen, while the asylum afforded by the American flag is immensely larger than it was, and more easily taken advantage of.

All this, I conceive, is quite consistent with what I have said of our seamen being, in point of fact, comparatively indifferent

to impressment. It is not to the particular method by which they are brought into the Navy that they have hitherto objected, but to the service itself. If their condition on board our ships be still further improved, I conceive most of their objections would vanish ; and although the power of using the impress, as a last resource, can never with safety be abolished, it may very well cease to act as a bugbear to seafaring folks.

Amongst the various causes enumerated by Captain Griffiths for the diminished efficiency of this source of equipping a fleet, he mentions the legal obstacles which, in all probability, will in future be interposed to our taking men from privateers, in consequence of the spirit of resistance to such arbitrary interference with the affairs of our fellow-subjects, which is every day gaining ground, and which (if once the spirit alluded to is fairly roused) will cross the impressor's path at every step. Heretofore the custom has been allowed to pass current, chiefly because it affected only one class of the community ; but a disposition to think,

feel, and act for others, has, he conceives, taken the place of this indifference in the public mind of late years; and if once it fastens its attention on the evils of impressment, there is no difficulty in foretelling the proximate result, whatever may ultimately prove the consequence.

There is much to awaken the attention, I confess, in this reasoning; but nothing, as I think, seriously to alarm us. The paramount necessity of manning a fleet in time of war will remain, or become in seasons of danger, as apparent to the country at large as ever it was; and the same resources will, with certain modifications, be then drawn upon, without much dispute, as in all times past. The increased size of our vessels of war renders more men necessary to fight the same number of ships, while there appears no reason to suppose that our fleets and squadrons in any quarter of the globe can well be smaller than formerly. It is thought that the multitude of steam-boats which work along the coasts of these islands must interfere with the nursery for seamen. I think they will have a contrary effect.

Steam-boat sailors are very good sailors, when, as with us, their service is chiefly at sea, and not, as in America, where it is confined exclusively to rivers. Very little of our coasting trade is carried on by steamers; and the good old colliers will continue always to convey the material which sets the steam in action. There is some reason, however, to fear that the recent alteration in our navigation laws, by which foreign shipping has been so much encouraged in our ports, has diminished the number of our effective seamen. In the present rage for chopping and changing, and making the most of every available halfpenny, it must often be impossible to decide beforehand what will be the eventual effect of any such measure. But the relinquishment of regulations framed expressly to keep up the numbers of the seafaring portion of our community, to the exclusion of foreigners, as might have been anticipated, has, I understand, sensibly diminished their numbers. Whether or not correspondent, or even greater economical advantages have been gained, is not the

question at present. Captain Griffiths is not of opinion that any regular diminution in the numbers of our native seamen has taken place of late years; but he seems to think that we are never likely to have at our command so many foreigners for the use of the Navy as during the last war. At that period, he justly remarks, by the joint operation of Bonaparte's continental system and our orders in council, together with the capture and destruction of most of their navies, and the total bar we put to their commerce, foreign seamen were necessarily driven out of employ in vast numbers, who were glad to accept the pay we gave them in our men-of-war.

I suspect that the evils of impressment, as an abstract question of right and justice, have never been formally considered by the seamen themselves. Capt. Griffiths, however, whose experience has been extensive, and whose authority is entitled to the highest respect, thinks the sailors have always considered them oppressive. He appears also to think, that this class will not long form an exception in the universal

desire which prevails, since the 'march of intellect' began its movement, for reducing every thing to the scale of positive reason and right. Heretofore, he also conceives, the public at large felt little or no sympathy for the classes liable to impress, but now this sympathy is general. I am not of opinion that there is any material change in these respects. At the same time, it must be owned, that if the seamen of a fleet of twenty or thirty sail of the line, skilfully prompted by reckless agitators, in and out of parliament, were to take it into their heads to discuss the evils of impressment, the doctrine of prescriptive usage, or even the old and solemn appeal to 'state necessity,' might lose much of their wonted force in these feverish days of reform.

All this, however, only renders the question of more importance than ever, and proves it to be one of vital consequence to our well-being as a maritime state. The difficulty ought not to be evaded by urging the improbability of its recurrence, but rather be viewed manfully on its own merits. In so considering matters, we should recollect the formidable danger which the

nation would incur by the loss of a power which at present is not only not disputed by the seamen, but which I most sincerely believe is not, in itself, looked upon as a great practical evil by the parties themselves. If, as I believe, most of those eventual consequences of impressment which constitute nearly its whole evil, are remediable, it is to them we should address ourselves, in the spirit of true reformers. We should not seek to make things better which are already working well, but rather try to correct evils which are not only considered to be such by those who are most nearly concerned, but which often work so ill as to threaten the destruction of the whole machinery.

I confess that the occurrences amongst the seamen at Shields and elsewhere, a few years ago, and indeed the whole current of public affairs of late, conspire to prove that, whether for good or for evil, a spirit has got abroad for discussing such questions which it may be difficult to manage at any time, and might be altogether impossible to control at the moment of greatest need, unless maturely considered in good season.

“Those who can calmly contemplate these chances,” remarks Captain Griffiths, “possess nerves to which I candidly own myself a stranger.” To this manly avowal most officers who have watched attentively the progress of causes and effects for the last twenty or twenty-five years, will be disposed to say—Amen!

But it is time to come closer to the remedial part of the subject, and to learn what are the causes of this unfortunate want of popularity in his Majesty's naval service in war, when every other branch of the public employment, and likewise of almost all private employments—many of them not half so well paid, and not one of them so comfortable in most respects—are perpetually overstocked with hands.

So sanguine am I on this point, that I live in confident hopes of seeing the day arrive, when it will be considered by seamen a favour to be admitted into the Navy, and a disgrace to be turned out.

CHAPTER VI.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NAVAL SYSTEM
CALCULATED TO LEAD TO THE GRADUAL
DISUSE OF IMPRESSMENT.

It has been sometimes supposed that our discipline is the cause of the unpopularity of the naval service ; but there seems little ground for this opinion, and certainly it is not an objection urged by the seamen themselves. There are, no doubt, ships to which sailors object, on account of the severity of the rule, as there are regiments unpopular to soldiers on that score. In the same way, schools, and even private families may be found, in civil life, where defects of temper, good sense, or good manners in the chief authorities, are the cause of much discomfort and merited unpopularity. But a very little inquiry will shew that it is not to the well-re-

gulated strict discipline of the Navy which the men object.

It is known that the best regulated ships during the last war and since have always been the most popular amongst the men ; and it was from those ships in which there was most leave given, that the smallest number of desertions took place, at least amongst that portion of the crew whom it was desirable to keep. The reason of this is plain enough. In a ship where the discipline is slack, almost the whole burden of hard work falls upon the good and willing men, while the worthless and skulking fellows shirk their duty. Besides which, it must happen, when several hundred men of such habits as seamen possess are brought together into so small a space as a ship, that unless there be some well-understood and well-enforced system of coercion ready at all times to repress the turbulent and dissipated, a man-of-war must and does become a most disagreeable residence. In short, those who have the misfortune to find themselves on board what is called an easy-going ship, have any thing but an easy time of it.

When it is recollected from what sphere of life our crews are taken, and the loose principles and manners which belong to that branch of it from which they are chiefly picked out, it will readily be seen how essential, even to their own comfort, it is that good order should be enforced. In point of fact, the seamen themselves freely admit that they are far better off in this respect in a man-of-war than in a merchant vessel. In the mutinies at the Nore and Spithead in 1797, there was no question on this point, for the discipline was kept up by the ring-leaders, exactly according to the rules and customs of the Navy, except that their corporal punishments were somewhat more severe. The seamen, indeed, are perfectly well aware that, all things considered, there can be no essential change made in the system which will not be worse for them. There have, no doubt, been very considerable improvements introduced of late years, and there seems still room for others; but that is not now the question, for it is not to this point, as far as I have been able to learn from the seamen themselves,

that they object. It is, at all events, quite notorious, that the discipline on board the American ships of war, in which some of our men entered, was much more severe than with us. It is a curious fact, also, mentioned by Captain Griffiths, that during the war, when the ordinary merchant-ships were giving the enormous pay of 4*l.* 10*s.* and 5*l.* a-month for seamen, in the East India Company's ships—in which the discipline approaches to that of the Navy—no higher rate of wages was given than 2*l.* 5*s.* “Here was a sacrifice of pecuniary interest to something; in honest truth,” says Captain Griffiths, “we are unable to assign any reason but the comfort of increased order, regularity, and steadier discipline. The East Indiaman in these respects was a minor man-of-war.” — *Griffiths on Impressment*, p. 45.

There are various minor causes of discontent in the Navy, all susceptible of remedy, but which it is not necessary that I should discuss at present. The two grand sources, however, as it appears to me, from which the unpopularity of our service

springs, and without removing which it will be in vain to hope for much amelioration of the impress, are, first, the manner in which the seaman's wages are paid—or rather, not paid ; and, secondly, the long and irksome confinement to which the men are generally subjected. It seems of the highest importance that these two branches of our system should be fully understood by those who really wish well to the Navy, and desire to see the impress disused, as far as the safety, honour, and welfare of his Majesty's dominions will allow. I shall therefore confine myself to a glance at these two leading obstacles to our popularity, being convinced, that if they were removed, many other minor arrangements might be safely adopted for doing away almost entirely with the practice of impressment, although the right, or reserved power to employ it should never be relinquished. It might be risking too much to venture upon many other useful changes, while such huge stumbling-blocks stand in our way. For example, limited service, and a lower scale of pensions, to be earned in shorter periods, and progres-

sively increasing bounties on further voluntary enlistment. These, together with occasional medals and gratuities for important public services might be adopted, to place our seamen on a fair footing with the privates in the army. Badges of distinction have lately been given to the seamen who are raised to the rank and responsibilities of petty officers, similar to those worn by corporals and sergeants, and the effect has been very great. There are many other similar points of detail—implying confidence in the men, and respect for their feelings—which might follow as matters of course, if we could only break down that systematic want of confidence forced upon us by the present method of paying our seamen, and by the degree of confinement to which they are liable to be subjected.

Before taking one step, however, in this march of improvement in our naval system, we must resolve, at all hazards, to keep up the character of the profession, and never again allow it to be degraded by the flagitious custom of sending men into our ships of war who have either been

found guilty of crimes by the civil authorities, or against whom such strong suspicions exist that, rather than stand a trial, the culprit is allowed to choose the alternative of a jail or a king's ship! The simple fact of such a choice being ever suggested, was always felt by the profession at large as a gross insult. And there can be no doubt, that while it acted as a serious deteriorater or degrader to the whole service, it indirectly, but seriously, increased the very difficulty it was intended to lessen.

This nefarious practice has been discontinued since the termination of the war; and I trust it will never, in any extremity, be resorted to again. Up to the present time, however, a certain number of smugglers have been sent on board his Majesty's ships sailing to foreign stations. The average, I believe, has been about sixty men annually, who were compelled to serve for five years, as a punishment for having broken the revenue laws. But although these people were legally guilty of an offence against the state, it was not one which was currently considered, in the sailors' class of society, (or, indeed, in any class,)

as very disgraceful, though it led to horrid crimes, and, consequently, our crews did not feel themselves degraded by the introduction of such persons amongst them, especially as they were generally very fine fellows, and prime seamen. When they were fully trusted, they very seldom if ever betrayed the confidence reposed in them; at least, none that I have ever had to deal with deceived me, though I never imposed more restraints upon them (after leaving England) than upon the rest of the crew. I rejoice, however, to learn that the Admiralty have decided upon totally discontinuing this practice; so that even smugglers will no longer be sent on board ships of war as a punishment.

How was it possible that well-conditioned men should look to the Navy as a respectable profession, when they were made to work, and even to associate familiarly, with the offscourings of jails?—with fellows who, having proved too rascally and too adroit for the civil magistrate, were sent to us to keep in order? It is true, we have ways and means of

bringing such bad subjects into habits of comparative order and obedience; but we cannot scourge out of them the leaven of the school in which they have been brought up. I have known one thief upset the internal tranquillity of a whole ship. But if, as I fully believe, the cat-o'-nine-tails be the only method of dealing with these incorrigible fellows, whom the civil magistrates in former times so unceremoniously got rid of by sending to a man-of-war, I wish to ask, why should the same wholesome discipline, which alone is effectual in controlling such persons, not be administered within the walls of the prison, instead of a man-of-war? If these rogues were well punished on the spot, and as soon after their crime as possible, the example might work some reform on parties trending towards similar courses, but not yet beyond recall.

Every officer of experience knows how difficult it is to "break the neck of thieving," as it is forcibly expressed, when once the practice gets into a ship. It is a sort of moral dry rot, which is only to be got rid of by the total change of the crew.

A single pickpocket, like a single fungus in the mysterious disease alluded to, may have power to spread its poison, and contaminate a whole ship's company—or, if not actually to demoralise them, at least to break up their comforts, by shaking their confidence in one another, and in some degree in themselves ; for men who are habitually, and as a matter of public duty, called upon to sit down to table and to work in company with persons of notoriously bad character, can hardly feel for themselves that degree of respect, without which there can be no steady rectitude.

A skilful and practised thief cast amongst such an unsuspecting set of fellows as a ship's crew, takes good care to lay the scene of his depredations at a distance from his own mess, and from the place where his own hammock is hung up. Thus, suspicion almost certainly takes its origin in the wrong quarter ; and as the true rogue contrives to suit his measures to the circumstances of the case, he finds no difficulty in misdirecting inquiries, and helping to fasten doubts on persons who know not how to extricate themselves from the

evidence by which they are entangled. Suspicion once engendered, the feeling of distrust flies about the ship, and inflames the minds of the crew. The evil also was speedily aggravated by the formation of a gang, who acted under the master villain so generously bestowed upon us by the civil authorities ; and as these gangs generally consisted of the youngest boys in the ship, the cruel axe of the destroyer was laid at the very roots of our social system afloat. This is no exaggeration, but truly what too many of us have seen ; and, therefore, so far from taking measures for imparting poison to our fleet, the utmost care should be used to eradicate all such stains, and to expel, with scorn and disgust, every disreputable character from our ships.

My friend, Captain Griffiths, although he differs from me materially on the subject of impressment, agrees, I am happy to find, in most other points of this discussion. In the course of our correspondence on these points, he has furnished me with many valuable suggestions, and also the following anecdote, which places

the mischief of introducing black sheep amongst us in a striking light.

“ An extraordinary case of a thorough-going plunderer of every thing within his reach, occurred in his Majesty's ship *Topaze*, while I had that ship. All our plans to detect him were very long unavailing; at length I apprised the first lieutenant of my intention to endeavour to catch the party or parties off their guard. When a new theft was reported, I privately directed the complainant not to say any thing more about it; and then declared aloud, before such as were in hearing, that it was of little use complaining to me—I had tried in vain, and the detection must rest with themselves. The ship was at sea, and I took no farther notice for a fortnight, when, as usual, we piped to dinner, from which nothing was ever allowed to disturb the men but imperious necessity. About twenty minutes afterwards, the hands were turned up in a hurried manner, every body sent aft, the mids and officers put on the guns to oversee all, while the people were kept in the centre, till a thorough search was made of all the bags, chests, and

hammocks. The theft, however, was not detected ; but, to my surprise, in one man's chest was found notes, gold, and silver, to the amount, I think, of sixty-four pounds. The ship was then in the Mediterranean. The owner was a half-and-half sort of fellow, only rated landsman, and a kind of ' yea and nay man ' apparently. As this sum struck all of us with surprise, the man was called on openly, before the assembled crew, publicly to account for its possession. He really gave a specious detail—so much so, that I was quite at fault, and addressed the men on the subject, telling them that it was their interest to detect the thief, who had so long revelled in plundering them. ' You know this man,' I said, ' his habits, his means, &c. much better than I can. I call upon any and all of you to say what you know of him, and to give your opinions. While I am most anxious to detect him, if the thief, I shall be still more pleased to find him an honest man.' A dozen men, one after the other, came forward, and at last a general belief was expressed by the others, of his story being true, and cer-

tainly not one of them thought him a thief. The general declaration was, that he was a miser—‘ If he is on shore with his shipmates,’ said they, ‘ he will call for a pint of beer, and pass the day with little farther expense.’ The money was returned to him ; and as they went down to finish their dinners, I publicly told him : ‘ You retire without charge against you.’ I left the ship some months after. More thieving went on ; and, perhaps nine months afterwards, this very fellow was fully detected, and lots of plunder discovered. The purser, Mr. Chimmo, sent me two books of mine, and a pocket handkerchief. Here was an extraordinary case of successful concealment, without even suspicion, among his compeers.”

How it has happened that so ruinous—I may call it nefarious and degrading a practice—as that of sending felons to our ships of war, was allowed to exist so long, in the teeth, too, of many urgent remonstrances of practical men, I never could understand. And, after all, what is it but an affected and spurious humanity on the part of the civil authorities on land,

to avoid, forsooth, the odium of corporally punishing raggamuffins who have no other feelings to touch but those of the body—who are insensible to shame, and whom nothing but the fear of the lash will ever keep in decent order. Were all such persons duly chastised—in strict justice, but with no mock lenity—either publicly near the scenes of their iniquity, or in the jails, where their colleagues should be compelled to witness the consequences of their crimes, I am well convinced that a far more efficacious check would be put to crime than can ever be afforded by the costly, and rather tempting punishment, as it is miscalled, of banishment, or the protracted and expensive degradation, high feeding, and very easy labour, of the hulks and penitentiaries.

I am well aware that this recommendation may be thought unfeeling, and be represented, by persons partially informed of the facts, as savouring of the stern school afloat. But I beg it may be recollected, that the system alluded to was, after all, essentially a subterfuge—a mere shifting of the burden from one pair of shoulders

to another. Whenever a magistrate, good soul! in his tender mercy shrunk from whipping a thief in the county jail, he felt no sort of scruple in packing him off to sea, where, in all probability, he received a much more severe dose of discipline than might have been necessary to his reformation, had his case been promptly and judiciously treated on shore.

At all events, without wandering further into these angry speculations, I trust we shall never again, in any extremity, be driven to such mischievous methods of manning our ships. At the very best, the total numbers of men so transported to us formed but a small portion of the hundred and thirty thousand seamen required, during the war, in the Navy. For the purposes of strength they were quite inefficient, while for those of mischief they were abundant enough in all conscience!

It cannot be too strongly or too frequently impressed upon the minds of commanding officers, that their first resource in discipline, and the most certain element of their strength in action, will ever be found in the fair character of the people

under them. The men themselves feel this deeply and perpetually, and will eagerly co-operate with their superiors in detecting and ridding the ship of bad subjects, if the principle be once fully established on board, that men of character only are deemed fit for his Majesty's service, and that blackguards ought to be turned out of it. The Admiralty, too, should be ready at all times to join with their officers in this good work ; and, by the joint operation of rewards and punishments to those who remain on board, and the expulsion of the incorrigible, contribute to keep up the character of the crews as much as possible. That this feeling influences the proper authorities, and has for some years done so, I have seen abundant evidence ; but the best proof of such a disposition being sincere, lies in actually adopting measures in the real spirit of improvement. Much, assuredly, has been done of late to add to the comfort and respectability of the men ; but there are still some measures of great importance, which, without additional cost to the nation, might go very far to render the naval

service popular. Our advantages in the Navy are already, in many of the most material respects, superior to those of every other service afloat, and this is freely admitted by the parties most concerned. Still there are two or three drawbacks, which tend to neutralise these benefits, and conspire to attach a degree of unpopularity to the Navy, which, I think, might and ought to be removed.

The system of paying seamen and marines in the Navy is very different from that in the army, or, indeed, in any other branch of the public service; and I can see no good reason why this offensive distinction should be allowed to remain. Rewards, to be efficacious, must not be too long deferred. In fact, labour and its hire ought to go hand in hand, according to every principle of fair dealing, and, I may add, of sound policy. Why should the principle of prompt payment, which is found so effectual in every transaction on land, be disregarded in the sea service? What person, in any walk of life on shore, would serve a master who said to him, "I will not pay your wages till

two or three years hence, in order that I may have a hold over you?" What gentleman, either afloat or at sea—at home or abroad—would remain an hour in any king's service longer than he could help it, were he told that he was not to be trusted, and that his pay would, therefore, be kept back for an indefinite period as a check over him? And although we may assume that our sailors are of a lower class, is it not highly indiscreet and unsound to use them almost as if they possessed no manly spirit at all?

Are not our soldiers every where paid monthly—privates as well as officers? Are not the sepoy's of India, and the Europeans in the remotest regions of our colonies, paid as regularly as those in the barracks at Knightsbridge? Why should there be any such distinctions between one class of his Majesty's servants and another? Is it because, in the case of the soldiers, it would be altogether impossible to keep troops together if they were treated as we have too long treated the seamen, by virtually telling them they were unworthy of confidence? The pay of the seamen serving

even in the home station, is kept back a twelvemonth, and in ships on foreign stations, till the end of the voyage, in order, it is alleged, to prevent their deserting. Does it, in fact, prevent their deserting? Will any officer of experience be found to say, he ever had reason to suppose that a sailor who felt unhappy in his ship was deterred from deserting by the fear of losing his pay? I believe the instances are very rare indeed. Such considerations belong not to Jack's habits of thought. So far, indeed, from keeping back his pay acting as a check on his disposition to desert, if from other causes he be so disposed, I strongly suspect that the circumstance of his not getting his money regularly is one of the chief causes of the discontent which prompts him to run off.

What can be more undeniable, as I said before, on every principle of fair dealing, than that labour and its reward should be found together? But what is the fact in the case of the naval seaman? He goes abroad for three or four years—is employed in all climates—in sickness, in battle, and in a thousand varied and trying situations,

where a cheerfulness of spirit is of the utmost moment, but throughout which he is treated too little as a rational being possessed of honourable feelings and principles. On returning to England at the end of his station, as I have already stated, he receives three or four years' pay at once, lands, gets drunk, is robbed of the whole of his money, and awakes next morning in a gutter, with nothing on his person but a pair of old trousers! What motives has a man so circumstanced to re-enter the Navy? He looks back to long years of arduous toil, followed by a few hours of drunken enjoyment, associated with the loss of all his fortune!

Whence comes it—and this forms a most important question—that our seamen possess such improvident habits? They are derived, I fear, from the system itself, which prevents the poor fellows from acquiring any knowledge of the right use of money. And then we wonder at their ignorance! It is the method of payment, in short, which really picks the wretched sailors' pockets, and not the Jews and prostitutes of our seaports. What does the

country gain, or rather what does it not necessarily lose, by such transactions? There is, probably, no money paid so freely by old Johnny Bull as that which he intends to put into the hands of the hardy blue jackets—his faithful defenders afloat; and yet what ought not his mortification to be when told, that, in very many cases, the wages so cheerfully disbursed find their speedy way down the maws of the land-sharks ranged along the beach of our sea-ports? And why, I must again ask, in the name of honesty, policy, or fair dealing of any kind between man and man—why should this anomalous departure from usage in every other department of the state, far and near, high and low, be made to press exclusively on the shoulders of so meritorious a class as the seamen and marines of his Majesty's ships? It is sad enough to consider that the evils of impressment cannot be removed from the sailor caste without endangering the safety of the country, but it is very hard, I think, and no very sound policy, to superadd the evils of poverty to those cares which are irremediable.

It cannot be answered, that sailors do not know what to do with money when they get it. They know very well what to do with it when they receive it regularly. Every officer who has served in ships where prize-money comes dropping in from time to time, knows that the habits of the men become speedily more decent and orderly, and that the discipline rapidly improves under the cheering influence of plenty of cash. I have myself witnessed many transitions of this kind from gloom and discontent to cheerfulness. There are no travellers who ever leave home in search of enjoyment that enter more keenly into the novelties and luxuries of foreign climates than sailors do. But it always proves a bitter mortification to them to see their officers going over the side daily, and joyously landing before their eyes, to revel in all the delights of a new latitude, while they must row the boat back again to their ship, merely because, by our suspicious policy, they are allowed no means of participating in these enjoyments, the fair reward of their hardy services! I well remember how intensely these feel-

ings were aggravated on board our ships lying in Madras Roads, in Bombay harbour, and at other places in India, where our poverty-stricken men stood by looking on, penniless; while not only the European private soldiers, but even the native troops, ran about jingling their rupees regularly once a month. Even the Hottentot troops at the Cape, and the African corps of black fellows in the West Indies, are punctually paid their wages monthly—all, in short, but poor Jack, whose reward is put off to a period when, perhaps, he cannot enjoy it—when his health is worn out by protracted service; or when, if he be not landed at Haslar Hospital, he is turned adrift to be pillaged at Castle Rag!

I have heard persons gravely state, as an objection to paying the seamen more frequently, that it would complicate the Navy accounts. What then? Is not the naval service made up of complications and difficulties which have been overcome? And is this petty additional trouble to be set in competition with an act of sound policy and justice, calculated to add un-

speakingly to the comforts of the crews of our ships, essentially to attach them to the service by enabling them to enjoy their time on board, to induce habits of self-respect, and most materially to lessen the unpopularity of the Navy, by removing an objection indefensible on principle, and which belongs to no other profession, and to no other branch whatsoever of his Majesty's service?

It is right to mention, in passing, that by a recent order (dated July 1824), "the captain may issue to each non-commissioned officer, seaman, and marine, the sum of four shillings pocket-money per month, and two shillings per month to each boy, at the expiration of every one, two, or three months, as the captain may judge expedient." Now, as this is a boon or a sort of gift, it ought not, according to the proverb, to be too closely viewed; and most assuredly, as forming a break in the old system, which worked so ill, every officer must greatly rejoice in the enactment. But, in very truth, it leaves the matter almost where it was—it retains, in reality, all the distrust, which is

the true source of the evil, while it adds but a small drop to the cup of the seaman's enjoyments. The first class of petty officers are entitled, upon an average, to little more wages than 2*l.* a lunar month, while an able seaman's pay, in all rates of ships, is 1*l.* 14*s.* Consequently, the utmost extent of pocket money which the captain is authorised "to deem it expedient" ever to issue (four shillings), amounts to no more than one-tenth part of the sailor's due, if he be rated a petty officer, and about one-eighth, if he be merely an able seaman; while seven-eighths of his well-earned wages are suspended before him to keep him in mind how unworthy of trust he is considered. It is true that he may have taken up slops or tobacco from the purser, or he may allot a portion of his pay to his wife, so that the sum kept back will seldom, if ever, amount to so large a proportion as I have stated: but the distrustful principle is the same; and so deeply and severely do the sailors feel the consequent privations, that even if the technical reasons against a change were much stronger, I should not hesitate to recommend their having their

whole pay every month, subject only to the fitting deductions for articles supplied by the purser. At the same time, they should be left at full liberty to supply themselves from the shore, whence they generally conceive they can be better served.

At present, the payment of seamen's wages on board ships on the home station commences at the end of the first year, and is renewed at the end of six months; but one half year's wages are always kept back, so that if, when a ship 'comes in the course of payment' at home, there be any men on board not entitled to more than six months' wages, these poor fellows see their messmates possessed of money which they are debarred from. It has been remarked by those officers who have served most on home stations, both in peace and war, that this plan of keeping back six months' pay very seldom, if ever, prevents desertion. When the ships are much in port, their crews, during the first twelve months, get deeply involved in debt to bum-boat people, tavern-keepers, slop-sellers, and other persons of both sexes, who furnish them with goods 'on tick,' as it

is called, until pay-day, and always at an exorbitant rate. By the time pay-day arrives, the sailors owe all they have to receive to the persons alluded to, and it now becomes a question with them whether they shall run off with their six months' pay when it is put into their hands by the pay-clerk, and so defraud their creditors for the sake of enjoying their money over again, or whether they shall discharge their debts, and thus remain without a rap for six months longer. If they decide upon the honest alternative, they are sure to be brought as deep in debt again at the end of the next six months as before. They never see their cash, in short—never actually finger it, except for a moment, and then, as I said, it becomes a matter of balance between honesty to those who have trusted them, and of dishonesty in escaping from all payment. Nothing, in fact, can be more at variance with good morals or right principles of action than the proceedings alluded to, into which our measures almost force many of our best-disposed seamen.

The following spirited remarks are

quoted from a manuscript of Captain the Hon. Henry Duncan, C.B., one of the most accomplished officers in the Navy, who has given his thoughts deeply to the consideration of these subjects, and who has added to the talents he derives by inheritance from one of the highest names in our naval annals, the rich harvest of a long and active course of professional experience, under circumstances eminently suited to afford useful information. The graphic fidelity of some of his pictures will bring the scenes he describes painfully to the recollection of most officers, and I trust they may arrest the attention of those whom it is so important to interest heartily in this discussion.

“ Let the seamen,” he urges, “ be paid more regularly, say every two or three months, both at home and abroad. Surely government should be as liberal to its servants as private persons are to theirs. If a gentleman goes abroad and takes a servant with him, he never omits to pay the man’s wages. If he cannot afford to pay him he does not take him. Many people—and some officers of the Navy amongst

them—assert that seamen would rather not be paid abroad, but prefer receiving all their money at once when they come home. But even were this the case, which I am far from admitting, it is manifestly injurious both to the seaman and to the service that they should be paid three or four years' wages at a time. I say that the present system of paying our sailors is the root of all the evils that exist in the Navy. A large sum of money placed suddenly in the hands of any other of the working classes would in like manner very naturally lead them into error; but the case becomes still stronger when applied to a sailor who has been cooped up in a ship for several years abroad, and who receives, on landing in his native country, 30*l.*, 60*l.*, or even 100*l.*,—the only money he has touched since leaving home! There can be nothing conceived more calculated to demoralise and ruin the character of our seamen than this practice. But, by adopting short payments, they must become more reasonable beings in money matters. From the habit of always possessing and making use of

it, they will learn to set upon money its true value, and then neither their prize-money nor their wages will be thrown away in the preposterous manner in which it has hitherto been wasted. Saving-banks for sailors, or something of the kind, may readily be established, and the seaman will not then be compelled to take one-half of what is due to him from a Jew to whom he mortgages the whole. He will then, indeed, be able to share his earnings with his family and friends, and to enjoy the hard-won and well-deserved reward of his toil. Most seamen who have wives and families allot a portion of their pay to them, particularly when on foreign stations; therefore there can be no reason, on their account, why the husband and father should not get the other part of their pay abroad. If they do not allot their pay, their families are just as much in want during their absence, whether the wages are paid or not.

“ It has been asserted by an official person, and an officer of the Navy, that there cannot be a greater favour to a seaman than to pay him a large sum at once,

and let him ‘enjoy it with his family!’ But how he enjoys it we all know. During the last war (and it may be so again), was he not paid, to use his own expression, with the topsail-sheet in one hand and the money in the other? And what was this money? Bank notes, which were almost useless, or, at most, worth but half their value on the foreign station to which they were bound. This was enjoyment with a vengeance!

“Can it be possible,” continues Captain Duncan, “that any man will defend the present system of paying the Navy who has witnessed the scenes which take place on board a ship on pay-day, or who knows what occurs during peace at our sea-ports, on paying off ships returned from ‘serving out’ a station abroad? It is not unusual to see fast-pulling boats from the shore, double-manned, and ready to carry off those seamen who wish to defraud their creditors; while other boats are stationed in equal readiness, and double-manned with bailiffs, to pursue and arrest the seamen as soon as they shall cease to derive the protection which a king’s ship

affords to small debtors. At the moment when this disgraceful chase takes place, the whole shore resounds with the cheers of the pursuers and pursued. Can it be possible, I repeat, that any officer who knows of these disgusting exhibitions, sincerely recommends a continuance of the custom of long payments, the sole cause of all the mischief? The very admission that seamen cannot be trusted on shore in foreign parts proves the badness of the system. Pay your men oftener—accustom them to a regular way of living, and no longer encourage, or rather force them, to spend their money as they now do, and you will not only be able to trust them on shore in the ports of any country, but when on shore they will behave as British seamen ought to behave, and will be viewed as such by foreigners, and not, as at present, as little better than beasts. Keep back no pay—do not suspect that sailors mean to desert, and they will not desert.”

CHAPTER VII.

LEAVE TO GO ON SHORE—THE LIBERTY
BOOK—JACK'S STRONG BOX.

THE preceding remarks lead naturally to another very important branch of the service, and its discipline—I mean that of giving men leave to go on shore; and here, also, I conceive that the intervention of the proper authorities might be employed most usefully. As a general rule, unquestionably, the more the responsibility of the captain is left undivided the better. He must in most cases be the best judge of what is right and fitting to be done; but although we should interfere with the details of his discipline as little as possible, in order to fix the due weight of responsibility upon him, still there may be occasions of general legislation so important that superior authority ought to assume the initiative, and direct, in as general terms as may be,

the establishment of a system by which all his Majesty's ships might be regulated, as far as those points admit of uniform regulation.

Captains, I conceive, should be officially recommended to give their ships' companies leave to go on shore at every port they touch at, and under every circumstance, when the nature of the service renders such a measure not altogether inexpedient. Nor, perhaps, ought the period of leave to be confined to twenty-four hours, when the situation of the ship admits of a longer term of absence. In fact, every thing should be done to prove to the seamen that, when on board a king's ship, they are not in a place of confinement, and that every reasonable indulgence will be given them, while all that is required of them in return is energy and good conduct. I would even go further, and prescribe it as a regulation very rarely to be infringed, that 'stopping leave' should not be made a punishment, but that, at all times, when the public service would allow of any portion of the crew being on shore, leave should be granted,

as a matter of course, to every man and boy in the ship, like the allowance of provisions, subject, exactly as that allowance is, to diminution on occasions of need, but not otherwise to be trenched upon.

“ Let us view the subject as a mere matter of policy,” says Captain Griffiths, “ and I have little doubt but the Records of the Navy Office would at once bear out the personal experience, that those ships wherein the greatest portion of leave on shore was given, ever present the smallest list of deserters, perhaps the largest portion of volunteers, reduced punishments, and less sickness. Of the effects of mind on health it would be idle to dwell; and men who, having been impressed into the service, are dissatisfied at being kept often two and three years (sometimes longer) without liberty to go on shore, must have theirs rankling with those feelings which, if they do not produce sickness, will never fail to strengthen and extend its effects. If, instead of finding excuses to withhold leave from fear of desertion, it were not only generally granted, but opportunities to give it sought after, and not confined

to the mere run on shore of twenty-four hours, but, as far as possible, extended to men going home, no matter the distance, where time would admit, it hardly appears that the beneficial effects it would produce can possibly be doubted. Yet suppose," adds this experienced and benevolent officer, "that desertion should sometimes, or even frequently occur, would there be more of it than under the system of confinement practised hitherto? And what becomes of the deserters? A very important question. They go to sea in merchant vessels, and are speedily impressed into the Navy again."*

All officers, indeed, who have tried the experiment fairly, must, I think, have found the benefit of the practice recommended, provided other circumstances on board were not so much out of joint as to render such indulgence impracticable. If, however, there were an order on the subject of granting leave, officers would then be more strongly urged to attend to

* Observations on some points of Seamanship; with Practical Hints on Naval Economy, p. 61. By Capt. Anselm Griffiths, R.N. 1828.

many points of the internal discipline of their ships, which at present may often be too little heeded. In some of the strictest disciplined ships in the whole Navy during the last war, the leave was never stopped, and the sailors seldom took an improper advantage of it. In short, when they are properly trusted—that is, when they are treated like men, and their honour reposed on, they very rarely betray that confidence.

“It is impossible, indeed,” writes my able and experienced friend Capt. Duncan, “to urge too strongly the point of granting leave to the fullest possible extent, for the most beneficial effects will be derived from it. Instead of officers being afraid to let their ships come into harbour to be refitted, lest the men should desert, they will find an additional reason for bringing their ships as near the shore as possible, in order to let the seamen enjoy the benefit of such proximity. Now that steam is so much used, there certainly ought no longer to be any detention of ships in harbour by contrary wind; and the saving of time and expense in refitting ships in

harbour, instead of a distant roadstead, might obviously be immense, when the loss of time in rowing backwards and forwards in boats to the dock-yard is considered."

It may be remarked here as something truly extraordinary, that, in the year 1833, there should still be established at Portsmouth no government steam-boat belonging to the harbour, and in constant communication with Spithead—say every hour, or every two hours. It will scarcely be credited that there is not yet any regular steam-vessel at that greatest of our naval ports for the purpose of towing ships of war to sea; so that when such assistance becomes indispensable, as it did last summer, when the armament against Holland was fitted out, the common Ryde passage-boats were of necessity hired for the occasion! The consequence is, that the old and wasteful fashion of sending the ships' boats from Spithead to the dock-yard for stores, or to the flag-ship to answer signals, is still continued.

Were a steam-boat, of no very great power, to be permanently stationed in the

harbour, not only for the purpose of towing ships out and in, but for towing off decked barges or lighters with stores from the dock-yard, victualling-office, and gun-wharf, and also for making a certain number of trips daily to Spithead, at stated hours, the necessity for wearing and tearing the ship's boats and the people would be done away with. Besides which, all the services alluded to would be more quickly and more efficiently performed—not one boat in ten which now leaves a ship would need then be sent away, and the annual saving of expense to the country, even in peace time, could not fail to be very considerable. In war, this promptitude and certainty of communicating with Spithead in all weathers, and the saving of boats and the men's health and time, to say nothing of the facility of getting off provisions and stores, would be of the utmost consequence to the service. But such improvements should take their rise now, in peace, so as to be gradually matured by practice, and fitted, by experience, to act promptly and with certainty on the occurrence of hostilities. In another point

of view, there can be no doubt of the policy of this method of communicating with the harbour. For it is notorious, that by far the greatest number of desertions take place from boats sent on shore, and detained there either by business or by stress of weather. Any thing, therefore, which should diminish the necessity of communicating by boats with the shore, is greatly to be desired.

It is one of the most puzzling problems in discipline to know how to punish a man who breaks his leave. I have given much of my attention to this point; and as I never made ‘stopping leave’ a punishment, nor ever had occasion to repent of this rule, I feel that I may speak upon it with some confidence. If the punishment be severe, the danger is, that a man who, from accident, from transient recklessness, or from drunkenness, has overstaid his time an hour or two, may be driven into desertion by the fear of chastisement on his return to the ship. On the other hand, if there be no penalty, or only a very trivial one, attached to the breach of a promise made on going ashore,

the slightest temptation is enough to keep some men from returning to their duty. Thus, in both cases, they are urged into error, and to steer between the two extremes is a nice affair for the officer.

I tried the following experiment with considerable success in a ship which I commanded for several years. The invention, however, is not mine, but is due, as far as I know, to a most excellent officer, now no more, of the name of Cowan, who was first lieutenant of the *Leander* when I was midshipman in her.

I have already mentioned that I made no exceptions—that is, I permitted every man and boy in the ship to have leave in his turn to go on shore, whatever might have been his conduct. I wished them all to feel, that whatever else they might have to complain of, the heart-breaking misery of a prison should not be super-added. I had, as usual, a ‘*Liberty Book*,’ as it is called, but I ruled it differently, adding sundry columns. When the people wished to go on shore, and it was settled how many could be spared, the names were written down in the first

column, and it was distinctly explained to them that they were expected to return to their ship by a certain hour next day. This hour was then written in the second column against each man's name, and shewn to him.

Next day, when the 'liberty men' dropped on board, either in groups or one by one, the exact hour and minute of each person's return was written down in column No. 3; and then, in column 4, the number of hours and minutes which had elapsed between the hour promised and that on which each man actually returned. If the men were sober at the time of their return, or if not, on the day after, they were made to look at the book and remark the difference between the columns, shewing the extent to which they had broken their leave. This stood as a balance against them, to be made use of in the manner I shall proceed to point out.

Suppose that the whole ship's company had been allowed to go on shore in turn, and that the ship then proceeded to another port. As soon as she was again at anchor and put to rights, it was announced

as usual, that leave was to be given to go on shore. Aft marched a dozen men, cap in hand, to give their names in for this indulgence. Now came into play column No. 4 of the Liberty Book. If, upon inspecting the list, it appeared that none of the men applying had formerly broken their leave, that is, exceeded the stipulated period, their request was granted, and ashore they went. But it generally happened, especially at first, that there stood against most of them a balance of some hours, and it then became a matter of direct and equitable adjustment to determine who had the best claim to consideration. A man who had come off to his leave was, I considered, clearly entitled to a preference before one whose debt amounted even to so short a period as half an hour; and so on throughout. To those persons against whose names stood the smallest amount of broken leave, the priority was always given. As the whole arrangement was put as strongly as possible on the footing of good faith and the point of honour, we succeeded, after a time, in making the men fully sensible,

that punctuality is an important part of truth; and thus they came to feel and to understand the object and spirit of the regulation.

It would sometimes happen, that a man who had overstayed his time a day or two, would not get on shore again during the whole time the ship was next in harbour; but this was clearly his own fault, and was looked upon not so much as a punishment, strictly so called, as the sacrifice incident to the liquidation of a debt. For, in fact, he really had been quite as long a time on shore as the rest of the crew, only he had chosen to take his share of the indulgence all at once, and contrary to orders. Heedless fellows in this sort of scrape generally got well laughed at for their pains, by their companions. I have heard them compared to those greedy dogs who swallow their two days' allowance of provisions in the first twenty-four hours, and then growl that they have nothing to eat! It is always a capital result in discipline, when the officer can manage to enlist the general sympathy of his people in the execution of his own ordinances.

It is usual to let the men go on shore before noon, but I satisfied the sailors in the ship I commanded, that it would suit them better to take their dinner comfortably on board at twelve o'clock, and land at one, instead of rushing into a Spanish pulperia the moment they went on shore, to swill abominably sour wine on an empty stomach, or swallow red-hot Pisco (a sort of ultra fiery whiskey), and to eat a miserable dinner of bacalao, garlic, and olive oil!

“ Let me advise you to land at one o'clock,” said I to the ‘ liberty men,’ “ mount your horses, take your gallop into the country, come back to the port, eat your supper, and then return on board; or, if you have a mind, take the best night’s rest you can catch amongst the chinchas and pulgas (bugs and fleas) of the Almendral or the Quebradas. But, whatever you do, pray try to find your way off sober like men, and not beastly drunk like hogs.”

At first these recommendations produced little or no effect; but, in the course of time, as the men had plenty of money (in

consequence of a measure which I shall explain by and by), and went constantly on shore, they came to see the reasonableness of dining in comfort on his Majesty's allowance in their own snug births, and then landing, to walk or ride about at leisure and like rational beings, not like frantic savages let loose on the public. Many of the men returned to the ship by sunset, and eventually it became a very rare thing to see any entry in column No. 4 of the Liberty Book.

I have always thought it was one of the most mischievous effects of the infrequent and uncertain leave on shore given during the war that the men fancied it a point of conscience to get as drunk as possible whenever they could. Whereas, when they are in the general practice, as at present in peace, of going on shore, they find it, on the whole, more agreeable to keep tolerably sober.

“As regards the seamen,” remarks Capt. Griffiths, who invariably allowed his men to go on shore during the whole war, “while leave, in the most extended shape the various services admit of, tends

to promote contentment, happiness, and cheerful activity, it also elevates their character, reduces the horrid drunken scenes, with all their injurious consequences, which a very limited indulgence of twenty-four hours' liberty so often produced. It would become, when judiciously managed, a most powerful means of reducing corporal punishments, by substituting refusal of leave."

I agree cordially with all this, except, perhaps, the proposal of stopping leave as a punishment; for I conceive that the essence of the plan, when it is possible, consists in there being no circumstance whatever that shall interfere with leave to go on shore.

I do not say there was no desertion from the ship I commanded, or that the people were more happily situated than in other vessels; but the men who deserted seldom ran away from leave, and rather took some other opportunity of getting off. I may remark, by the way, for the information of persons who are not acquainted with the nature of a ship's duties, that it has been found next to impossible, by any

system of precautions, effectually to prevent desertion from a ship in which the men are determined not to remain. It is often a source of bitter mortification to officers, to find that all their exertions to render the ship an agreeable residence to their men prove insufficient, and that the persons they had most confided in are sometimes the first to run away. Still, the best security against this roving disposition on the part of the men, under all circumstances—at least all that I have seen—is to trust them freely and frankly on shore.

I am well aware that the experiment which I have just described was tried under the most favourable circumstances. The ship I commanded (the Conway, of 28 guns) was a small one; the crew were all volunteers; it was peace time; and the climate was delightful; while the nature of our occupations, at least as far as the crew were concerned, partook a good deal of the pleasure of yachting. If we substitute war, impress, and hard fagging service in a cold climate, and in a line-of-battle ship, blockading, or employed in long cruises, the plan I found so efficacious in the ab-

sence of all these drawbacks, might not answer so well. I state this broadly, because I wish to exaggerate nothing; and I am fully sensible that very considerable modifications must often be made under the various severe trials to which our ships are so often exposed. Still, however, I am not the less satisfied that the principle of invariably giving the people leave to go on shore is a sound one, and is almost always practicable to a considerable extent.

“There is nothing,” most truly, says the judicious Capt. Griffiths, “which so powerfully operates to reconcile the mind of man to his lot as the largest portion of freedom his situation is capable of admitting. And if this position be correct, then will every unnecessary restraint act even more powerfully in the opposite scale. Men look to the indulgence of correct liberty, and therefore receive it as a thing of course, and its possession sets the mind at ease; while an irritating, an angry, and galling impatience attends every unnecessary infringement of it.”

It has sometimes occurred to me, that it

might have a good effect if men who broke their leave were made to forfeit a fraction of their pay nearly corresponding to the time thus stolen, as it might be called, from the service of the king and country—say a penny an hour, or a couple of shillings a-day. But this suggestion cannot be adopted with effect till the seamen's wages are paid regularly and frequently, both at home and abroad, otherwise they would not be aware of the importance of stopping a day or two's pay. As soon as their money shall be frequently and regularly paid, the men will learn to appreciate the value of their reward. Many of them, I fully believe, will then come off to their leave, rather than lose half-a-crown, if deducted from their pay at the moment, who would not be deterred from deserting by the certainty of eventually losing fifty pounds on the present system. In both cases the temptation to remain on shore might be exactly the same; but in one instance the loss would be immediate and intelligible—in the other vague and remote.

I have said that the Conway's people in South America had always plenty of

money ; but this requires some explanation, for at that period (1821-2) the men were not allowed to receive even the smallest portion of their wages abroad. The republics in that quarter of the world had not then been recognised by England, and consequently we had no ministers, nor even consuls, at any of the ports along the vast extent of coast visited by British ships. One of the results of this singular state of things was the lawless condition of the crews on board many of our merchant vessels. At all times, the mercantile marine discipline is sufficiently loose ; but in countries where no appeal could be made to authorities regularly constituted by our own government, either by the master against his insubordinate crew, or by the sailors against the oppression of their captain, the evils arising from such laxity were seriously felt by the trading interests. In the absence of consuls at Valparaiso, Lima, and elsewhere, the duties of that department fell into the hands of the captains of the ships of war, who did as well as they could, though, of course, from being but scantily informed as to the tech-

nicalities of the consulate office, they could not pretend to any great correctness in the use of the proper forms. Be this as it may, the merchants trading to those parts were often reduced to the greatest difficulties; sometimes by the refractory disposition of their crews; sometimes by their deserting in a body and leaving their ships at anchor unmanned; and sometimes by their getting into such scrapes with custom-house officers and other local authorities, that the purposes of their voyage were brought to a complete stand-still. Out of these various dilemmas, it became a novel duty for captains of men-of-war to extricate their countrymen.

It so happened, in short, that, in almost every port which we visited, we found English, American, and sometimes ships of other nations, in want of help. It frequently happened that the assistance required consisted of carpenters', joiners', caulkers', and shipwrights' work, or that our sailmaker or the armourer's experience was needed; but, generally speaking, we were applied to for seamen to refit the rigging, or for stout working hands to stow

away or hoist out the cargo. As one of the chief objects of our ship's being placed in those seas was to assist the subjects of his Majesty wherever we met with them, the commander-in-chief, Sir Thomas Hardy, not only made no objection to this assistance being given to the merchants, when the king's immediate service allowed of our sparing men for that purpose ; but he encouraged us to contribute as much as we could in the manner required to advance the interests of the country.

As the wages of labour in those new countries were very high, the owners, supercargoes, masters, and others who engaged the services of our seamen and artificers, were willing to pay the men well for their trouble ; and, generally speaking, at a higher rate than was current in the market, in consideration of the greater degree of order and habits of attention which belonged to the parties we sent them. Even the ordinary remuneration, however, proved an ample source of profit to our people, and enabled them to live with ten times the comfort they could otherwise have enjoyed during the whole period of

our station. In sending such working parties as we could spare to assist these merchant ships, we took care to select from the crew those hands which could best be spared from his Majesty's service, and were most likely to do justice to the required tasks. But as their absence necessarily entailed a heavier degree of work on those who remained behind, I thought it but fair to let it be fully understood, that all money derived from these extra jobs should be placed in a common fund, to be distributed, from time to time, equally to every man on board. This arrangement was readily and cheerfully entered into the moment I suggested and explained it. All jealousy or suspicion of favour being shewn to one more than to another was thus completely prevented, while the first lieutenant was enabled at all times to pick out the men best suited for the services required.

Two incidental effects arose out of all this which proved of considerable utility. The constant extra practice greatly improved our seamen and artificers in the manipulations of their business, while, at moments when they must otherwise have

been quite idle, their minds were kept so fully employed, that I never saw men more contented than at those busy periods. There was also much animation on board, caused by this steady influx of cash into the ship's company's treasury.

It is a good thing, by the way, to have at all times a 'Strong box' on board every ship. In this place of security the people should be encouraged by every means to place their money. It will be sufficient that each man deposit his cash in a bag marked with his name, and that he be at liberty to take what he pleases from it from time to time. No accounts need be kept, provided care be taken never to allow the box to be opened, except at a stated period, and under the eye of a commissioned officer. I understand, from good authority, that no plan is more effectual in preventing theft and gambling, than this of 'Jack's strong box.'

I have already mentioned that the whole crew were allowed in turn to go on shore on leave; and it was our invariable custom, as each man went over the side, to give him, for his day's fun, a dollar out of the

public pose, and to mark it against his name in a book opened for the purpose by the clerk. With this sum a sailor could land and take an hour or two's ride amongst the Cordilleras, return to the Port, enjoy his segar, his supper, and his bed, and return next day to his duty, well pleased with his 'lark,' but not sorry to get back to the comforts of his cheerful home. At first, before they fell into the way of taking their dinner on board, and landing afterwards, and while there existed amongst them the brutal habit of getting drunk as a matter of course, their dollar went but a short way. When, however, longer experience taught them better habits, the right use of money dawned upon them, and as they never took their change without counting it, they learned to calculate beforehand what each item of their jollification was to cost.

By and by the men became desirous of adding to the comforts of their mess places ; and, with a portion of the money which, at their request, was served out to each man, they bought mirrors, crockery, pictures, and much better clothes than the

purser supplied. In short, more or less of that improved taste and feeling of pride, in its way, crept into the ship, which is always observed amongst men-of-war seamen when prize-money is frequently received. I should even expect still better things to arise from the regular and frequent payment of the seamen's wages, than any which can spring from the uncertain and unequal distributions of prize-money, or from such precarious sources as that I have just been describing. If the men felt certain of receiving their due reward at fixed periods, they would naturally act upon this conviction, and a considerable portion of that absurd irregularity of habits, alike destructive of good order, good taste, and good morals, for which our seamen are at present so disreputably celebrated, might in time be exchanged for better tastes, and for manners less repugnant to every thing we could wish to see in any class of the community.

One evening, about half-past eight or nine o'clock, while we were lying at Valparaiso, the owner of a light merchant brig at anchor near us, with her topmasts

down, came on board, and mentioned, in confidence, that he had thoughts of engaging in a grand speculation, provided we would assist him with all our might and main.

“ I propose,” said the owner, “ to equip, load, and despatch that dismantled brig, with a particular cargo, to Lima ; but, in order to my reaching that market in time, I must get her rigged and off before several other vessels, which I suspect are looking the same way. Now, as this can be accomplished only by dint of the utmost exertion of all your skill and strength, I have come on board the Conway to see how far you will assist a speculation, in which many thousand pounds of British capital are to be embarked.”

The first lieutenant said he should be most happy to assist in such an enterprise, and sent for the boatswain and carpenter, who were just stepping into bed. After a short consultation, in which the owner explained what was required in the rigging and shipwright's departments, it was agreed to commence working at once. The happy merchant relanded to complete the

bargain he had left unsettled, till he should privately ascertain whether or not we were 'conformable,' as he called it. His friends on shore, who knew nothing of his nocturnal visit to the Conway, nor its objects, and had scarcely noticed his absence from the supper-table, readily closed with the terms he now offered for their goods. They stared at his boldness in making such a purchase, for as yet they saw no possible means of his getting the things off his hands.

In the meantime the boatswain had roused out of bed as strong a party of his best sailors as could work at the brig's rigging; the carpenter, with his mates and caulkers, brought up their tool-boxes to the gangway; while the armourer lighted the forge, and the sailmaker fitted the palm and needle to his hands—all ready for a hard night's job. The owner of the brig speedily returned, bringing with him the master and the mate, and in less than half an hour the little vessel was boarded, and clustered over with half a hundred of our fellows, who were so delighted in the ploy, that they worked,

laughed, and chatted, under the bright Moon of a Chilian midsummer's night, as merrily as if they had been equipping their own barky to chase a galleon. At sunrise this party were relieved by a fresh set of hands from the ship, while numerous shore-boats were hired, first to bring off the ballast, then to ship the cargo—all of which was hoisted in by a working party of our marines, and stowed away below by the holders and other men from the Conway most accustomed to that kind of work. The caulkers and carpenters laboured hard at the decks and sides, careless of all interruptions. The topmasts and top-gallant masts soon perched themselves aloft, and in due season the sails were brought to the yards. To an inexperienced eye the whole might have presented a scene of confusion; but to those who were in the secret, it shewed nothing but a well-ordered certainty of purpose, which delighted the owner of the brig, as he saw the spars gradually rise above one another, and the vessel settle more and more in the water, under the weight of the rich cargo with which she was freighted.

About the middle of the day the master landed, in order to cast about for a crew ; and having looked into half-a-dozen pulperias or wine-shops, he readily engaged the required number of sailors. These he presently reduced to a state of complete intoxication ; and as fast as they sunk under the genial influence of Bacchus, he had them carried off to the brig, where they were laid in their births, as unconscious as the bags of wheat and flour which formed the principal part of the cargo destined for the famished city of Lima, then blockaded by Lord Cochrane.

Towards sunset, the whole equipment and stowage of the brig being completed, all our working parties — by this time pretty well fagged — were withdrawn, except the boatswain and one boat's crew. These hands, at the master's request, then proceeded to weigh the brig's anchor, and having reefed the topsails, hoisted and trimmed them for standing to the northward, right before the wind, all night.

At last, when the harbour was nearly cleared, the boatswain, heartily wishing the captain a very good voyage, put the tiller

into his hands ; and leaving him and the mate, (apparently the only two living souls on board,) returned to the Conway to receive the grateful acknowledgments of the enraptured owner, who brought with him a huge bag of dollars, to add to the strong-box of our crew, in reward for their well-timed exertions, which, he assured us, would put several thousand good pounds in his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOON AND THE LONGITUDE.

AFTER a ship is commissioned, rigged, stored, manned, and armed, and is ordered to sea, it becomes necessary to consider how she is to be carried in safety over the boundless ocean.

Well may our glorious satellite, the Moon, be called the sailor's friend! She not only lights up the night for us, and cheers us on our progress, but guides our steps in security over trackless seas, which, but for her aid, must be traversed with doubt and difficulty. Yet no one, I suspect, can fully understand these advantages who has not been repeatedly made to feel the contrast between navigating with and without such companionship. When a ship is near the shore, especially if the coast be unknown, the difference between a moonlight evening and a dark one is im-

mense. If the Moon be up, her benignant influence extends to every part of the ship, and every member of her crew. The frenzy and confusion she is supposed to impart to her votaries, is all a libel, for she is the mistress of order and sobriety. Aided by her, the navigator acts with the vigour and confidence which become his station, steers in for the shore—be it steep or shallow—scruples not to enter his port, or to wind his way amongst rocks and shoals, till at last he drops his anchor in his proper birth without the loss of an hour, instead of dilly-dallying till daybreak. As the ship sweeps gaily along the land, lighted up, as it were, for the occasion, the officers look about them, remark the coasts, take notice of the soundings and the courses steered; and even the drowsiest amongst the middies are excited to something like a generous enthusiasm by the vivid interest of a fine moonlight scene, in a country unvisited before.

In a dark night, near a dangerous coast, with a baffling wind, occasional fogs, a drizzling rain, an uncertain tide, and perplexing soundings, different from those of

the chart, the whole aspect of affairs is changed. The commander feels harassed and distracted, and often, with the most active zeal, and the best information possible, is left totally at a loss which way to act. The officers under him, who share little of his heavy responsibility, become stupified by the obscurity, and cease to make any great exertion—knowing or fancying it to be useless. The sailors, fagged, drenched, and confused by the uncertainty of purpose in the higher councils, drop into various out-of-the-way corners, or stow-holes, and are with difficulty brought to act together at the moment of need, in the midst of the rain, cold, and darkness.

But when the merry Moon is shining bright, Jack is always alive. Instead of skulking under the bows of the boats on the booms, to escape the pattering of the tiresome sleet, or cowering to leeward of the masts silent and comfortless, he joins his companions in the middle of the deck, on the spot where the light shines freest from the shadows of the sails and ropes. There he tells old tales of deeds done in

former years—or carols, light of heart, to the stars and planets sparkling above him. Fatigued though his limbs may be, his mind is fresh and ready for service; and at the first sound of his officer's voice, or the preparatory notes of the boatswain's call, before its shrill tones are heard, he leaps to his post, conscious that his activity is noted, and, feeling assured that his exertions are not wasted, he works, as it is called, with a will. Even the sails appear animated on such occasions, and hold a better wind. The yards are trimmed sharper and more in unison with one another; the topsail-sheets come closer home, and the bowlines are better hauled. Every rope is drawn to its proper degree of tightness, and the ship, grateful for the assistance, sails all the better. The heavy dew which, in such a serene night, settles upon the canvass, closes up the pores, and thus, by catching every puff of wind, enables the seamen to profit by airs so faint, that in dark nights their existence would not be known, and their service lost.

This accidental use of the word serene

reminds me, that the Spanish for dew is 'serena,' and thence, no doubt, their romantic Serenade. To those, indeed, who have often watched the silent settling of the dew on the cordage and sails, during such nights as I am now describing, I need not recall the poetical images which the season brings to mind. For my own part, I can then almost fancy I hear the tinkle of the sweet guitar, or see the inviting glitter of a dark black eye at the tempting lattice, as my thoughts are carried back to the luxurious shores of Chili or Peru ; or, earlier still, when life and love were young, to the gay scenes of Vigo and Corunna !

If, however, the sky is overcast, the Moon below the horizon, and the chill wind, drifting past, sighs mournfully amongst the dripping shrouds, not one sail fore and aft is properly trimmed, and the poor ship bags sadly to leeward. If a squall comes, the ropes get foul ; the yards stick aloft ; the sails are split ; the men appear torpid and paralysed ; away goes a mast ; the shore and surf make their appearance ; the helm is put down, but she refuses to come about ; the anchor is cut

away, the cable is jammed in the tier; the keel takes the ground, and all is lost!

Or, even supposing none of these fatal and extreme disasters to arise, the mischief and inconvenience, loss of time, loss of way, and, alas! too often, loss of temper, are evils essentially incident to the absence of our soothing and pretty friend the Moon. If an accident happens to a sail or spar when the night is pitch dark, twice as long a time is required to repair it as when she is up. In the mean time the helmsman, let him be ever so skilful or attentive, must yaw the ship about, for he can see nothing a-head to act as a normal; and the compass, in spite of the steadying touch of the quarter-master, will often spin half round the box; thus, much way is lost. The leadsman in the chains, with the snow drifting in his face, and his hands cold and benumbed, can with great difficulty tell the marks on the line—or his lead gets foul of the fore-sheet, or is cast over the flook of the spare anchor. In short, every thing goes wrong; or, to express the matter correctly, a vast deal more trouble is neces-

sary to keep things in tolerable order, when it is dark than when it is light.

When the Moon is near the full, and high in the heavens, the helmsman feels his power doubled. Instead of twisting about the wheel, a turn at a time, and wearing out his strength and spirits in vain attempts to keep the ship's head steady by means of a needle which vibrates a point or two each way, he stands with one hand on the side-spoke, and his eye fixed on the weather-leech of the foretop-sail, which he has brought just to touch the bright star Canopus, or Capella, or, it may be, the great planet Jupiter, or even the glorious Moon herself. Whichever it be that he fixes on, he can instantly discover, by its change of relative position, that the ship's head begins to deviate from the straight course. Then, by giving the slightest touch to the helm — often by merely a gentle additional pressure, without giving any perceptible motion to the wheel, he counteracts the tendency of the ship to err in her course.

By no strained or unmeaning analogy it may be said, that errors in the course of dis-

cipline are similarly corrected on such occasions ; for the officer commanding the deck can readily perceive the first deviations from the line of duty, and by letting it be felt that he discovers the incipient offence, or rather the tendency that way, he may generally prevent it altogether. If a squall should threaten to come upon the ship in a bright evening, the sail is taken promptly off the ship, and as promptly reset when the breeze is past. The ropes are coiled up in readiness, and each man is at his station, to give effect to the word of command the moment it is uttered. The leadsman sings out joyously and confidently the soundings—true to a foot—instead of fiddling with his fingers for the mark, and making an allowance for the height at which he stands.

The occasion upon which, during all my professional life, I have felt most grateful to the Moon, was when I first visited the mighty River Plate, of which the entrance is more than a hundred miles wide, and filled with numerous shoals and dangerous passages. We kept close to the right hand, or northern shore, all the day, and at sunset passed the port of Maldonado.

I had orders to communicate with any of his Majesty's ships which might happen to be lying there, and therefore stood close in ; but on perceiving only two French men-of-war, one bearing an admiral's flag, I resolved to stand on for Monte Video, which lies in a direction nearly west. The wind, which was moderate, blew from the east, the Moon was at the full, we possessed excellent charts, and the late Captain Foster, then mate of the Conway, knew, from personal survey, every inch of the way. So on we glided as steadily as if we had been navigating some glassy inland lake, for there was not even a ripple on the surface, and the mighty Rio de la Plata does not begin to assume the appearance of a river for more than a hundred miles further up. In short, nothing could be more beautiful than this run of sixty miles, for we kept the land in sight almost the whole of the way. As fast as we lost sight of one headland, or island, we looked out for some other which we knew to lie nearly in our path.

A better proof can hardly be afforded of the perfection to which the science of

hydrography, or nautical surveying, is brought, than the fact, that even merchant vessels can now run amongst the shoals, and in the shallow water of the River Plate, not only without apprehension, but with almost as much confidence as if the unseen submarine ridges of sand, amongst which they thread their way, were raised above the surface.

About midnight we passed the islands of Flores, between which and Monte Video we had reason to believe we should find the commodore's ship at anchor. Accordingly, without altering our course a single point, we hit upon the exact spot, and presently saw the tall masts of the *Superb* glistening in the moonlight right a-head. We dropped anchor close alongside ; and on my going on board to report the ship's arrival, I received orders instantly to proceed to Buenos Ayres. Though it was still night, the pilot whom we received from the ship made no difficulties, saying, as he glanced his eye to the Moon, and measured her altitude, " With such a light as that we shall get on as well as if it were day."

Although it is, undoubtedly, in the fine-

weather regions of the globe that the picturesque or poetical beauties of the Moon are most felt and seen, her highest utility to seamen lies in the tempestuous latitudes beyond the tropics. Many a stout-souled mariner's heart beats with anxiety and apprehension as he steers his bark round the stormy capes which bound Africa and America, or, worse still, into the British Channel, before a hard south-wester, and prays for the Moon to rise. Even to this hour, though many years have passed over my head since then, I remember the joyous feeling with which I blessed the coming of her pale light, when my poor ship was entangled with icebergs off Cape Horn, in the long and dreary nights of the Antarctic July. Smugglers, like the borderers of England and Scotland, alternately profit by the Moon's light and by her absence—calculating their secret purpose for the dark period—that which is open for the evenings which are bright. “*Reparabit cornua Phœbe*,”—wait till the Moon refills her horns—is a motto well known on Tweedside! In like manner, squadrons blockading and blockaded court the aid

of the changing Moon, and shape their proceedings accordingly. When she rises, and the in-shore frigate, after many an hour of anxiety, by counting the enemy's fleet, can ascertain that none have escaped, the relief to the officer on the watch is unspeakable. But what must be the stealthy delight of a well-freighted enemy's ship that has passed the blockading squadron, and discovers, when the Moon gets up, that her powerful antagonists are no longer to be seen !

The ever-varying nature of her light, the irregular periods at which she rises and sets, the power which clouds of a certain degree of thickness possess of extinguishing her lustre altogether, produce an endless diversity, which defies all calculation, and often renders those who depend upon her the most wretched of mortals. No gay flirt ever jilted man more wantonly than whole crews are often cheated and laughed at by the coquettish Moon ; and yet, like the bewitching Cynthias of the minute, she never fails to win all hearts back to her worship the instant she chooses to smile upon them again !

In singing the praises of the Moon, I need not dwell on the mysterious but irresistible connexion existing between her chaste ladyship and the waters which cover the face of the earth—a tangible evidence of the action of gravitation, of which no familiarity with the phenomenon ever lessens the interest. Even on coasts where the rise and fall of the tides is but trifling, circumstances occur to mark the empire of the Moon over the waves in characters not to be mistaken. On the south coast of Peru, I remember well, that although the perpendicular elevation and depression of the sea was small at any period of the month, yet at the seasons of full and change, the surf lining the shore became more than doubly formidable and difficult of passage, while the waves which dashed against the cliffs rose to many times their common altitude. I am really afraid to state how high I have seen these masses of water travel up the face of the rocks at Mollendo, and, curling backwards, tumble again into the sea with a roar so loud, that it made all on board quake, though we were anchored at more than a mile off,

with stout iron cables. I speak of regions where no storms are known, and where, except at its margin, the ocean, as its name imports, is truly Pacific. Even at a short distance from the land, little if any augmentation of the long regular swell is perceptible at the period of full and change. But the increased movement caused by the joint action of the Moon and Sun at those epochs, materially, though insensibly to our observation, augments the great tide waves, or oscillations, in the deep sea ; and when these are interrupted in their gigantic play by the shelving ashore, however steep, the result is a most enormous increase of breakers on the coast causing the interruption.

That which affords merely an object of curiosity, or, at most, a topic of philosophical speculation to indifferent observers, may become of great practical importance to an officer whose mind is open to every opportunity of turning the resources of nature to his purpose. This fact of the high surf on the coast of Peru, was known to every one in those countries, but it required the master-mind of Lord Cochrane

—now Rear Admiral Lord Dundonald—to seize upon the advantages which it furnished to his daring enterprises. When a landing was to be effected, or troops to be embarked, his lordship always contrived to drop, as if by magic, on the fittest spot, at the very quartering of the Moon; but when it became his policy to avoid communication between him and the shore, he took care to fix the period of his operations at the change or full—seasons when the surf always ran so high, that not even the balsas of the country could pass it.

The professional instances might be indefinitely multiplied, in which the indirect influence of the Moon, or the direct benefit of her light, modifies the operations of seamanship in all climates. But it is only between the tropics that the full splendour of her surpassing beauty is acknowledged. No poet, unless it were Moore, nor painter, unless Turner should be tempted to visit those seas, could do justice to the exquisite scenery of the Straits of Sunda, or Sincapore, or Malacca. To sail about in those regions in a bright moonlight evening forms truly

the beau idéal of navigation ; and so little can I bear the thoughts of never enjoying it again, that if any excellent old lady, or good-natured and worthy old gentleman, were to leave me a fortune, I should be half tempted to buy me a ship of my own, and sail back to the East, to banquet as I was wont in those delicious countries ! Often, indeed, have I wondered how it happens that the spirited and wealthy members of our Yacht Club content themselves with such tiny, minnow-like voyages as they make, instead of seeking in distant climes for scenes of which one night is worth a whole year of their present jog-trot routine.

But the genuine triumph of the Moon, after all, consists in her power, when duly propitiated, of conducting her votaries round the world, and leading them into unknown seas and bays, and far from land, with as much certainty as if they were sailing close to their own shores, familiar to their eyes from infancy. A very few words will render her paramount utility in this respect obvious, and make the mighty mystery of nautical astronomy

intelligible in some degree to every one who has considered the subject even in the most superficial manner.

As the earth wheels round on its axis once in every day, each spot will, in succession, bring the sun upon its meridian, or plane passing through the zenith of the place and both the poles of the world. The moment when the sun's centre reaches this plane is called noon ; and as there are 360 degrees in the whole circuit of the globe, and we choose to divide the period of time into twenty-four hours, there must pass, every hour, exactly fifteen of these degrees ; or, in other words, a place which lies so far to the westward of us as to require an hour's interval to bring its meridian to the sun, after our own meridian has passed it, is said to lie in longitude 15° west of us ; and it will be one o'clock with us when it is noon at that spot. In like manner, a place situated so far to the eastward as to get the sun on its meridian an hour before ours reaches it, is said to lie in 15° of east longitude ; and it will be one o'clock there when it is noon with us. And so for all intervals of a greater or smaller magni-

tude. Thus, if we possess the means of discovering, at any particular spot, and at any given instant, the exact hour of the day ; and if we also possess the means of determining the hour of the day, at the same moment, on the meridian of any other spot, we obtain the difference of time between the two places. That is to say, we learn how long it takes for the sun to pass from the meridian of one of these places to that of the other. If this difference of time be then reduced into longitude at the rate of 15° to an hour, we ascertain the difference of longitude, or distance east and west, between the two places. This is the grand problem of the longitude, the attempt to discover which has turned so many heads.

The whole difficulty, therefore, resolves itself into these two points : First, to determine the ‘ Time at ship,’ or exact hour of the day, counting from noon when we are observing ; and, Secondly, to discover the ‘ Time,’ or hour of the day, at some other meridian (say that of Greenwich,) at the same instant. The one subtracted from the other gives the dif-

ference of Time between the two meridians; and thence, by remembering that 15 degrees of the earth wheel round in one hour, we obtain the difference of longitude between the two places.

There are various methods in use for working out this question, but I shall mention only two, which have infinitely higher claims to notice than all the rest put together, at least in the practice of navigation.

One of these is called the method of Lunar Distances; the other the method of Chronometers. That by chronometers is extremely simple. It consists in regulating a watch, constructed upon particular principles, side by side with a clock at Greenwich, so that the two may keep going correctly together; that is, always shewing the same hour at the same moment. If this watch, or chronometer, be good of its kind, it will continue to shew the same time as the Greenwich clock, under any change of temperature, and in every place to which it may be carried, whether the distance be a few yards, or include the whole circuit of the earth.

I need scarcely pause to remark, that,

in practice, it is a matter of indifference whether the chronometer so carried about from place to place really shews Greenwich time, or whether its daily rate of going, and, consequently, its accumulated error, be known at any stated moment. All that is required of the chronometer is, that it should afford the means (with or without correction) of ascertaining what is the true Time at Greenwich at any given moment.

Supposing our chronometer to possess this property, we have then only to find out, by means of a very simple observation, the true Time at the ship at any given instant (that is to say, the sun's distance from the meridian), and carefully to note the exact hour and minute shewn by the chronometer, or, which is the same thing, by its old companion the clock at Greenwich at that moment. The difference between the ship's Time, so found on the spot by actual observation, and the Greenwich Time, shewn by the chronometer, (when reduced to degrees at the rate of 15° to an hour), is the longitude required.

The method of lunar observations is, in

principle, identically the same. The only difference between them consists in the manner of arriving at the results. Dr. Wollaston, in a letter to me, dated 23d April, 1826, says, “The Moon is the hand of a great Greenwich clock, seen all over the world, with which you compare the chronometer, to see how it differs and how it goes. You then compare it with the sun as clock of the place. Having by another separate observation determined the latitude.”

In practice it is easy to press the Moon into our service, and make her act as the hand of a Greenwich clock in the sky. The Moon, as every one knows, moves, like all the planets and satellites, from west to east, amongst the stars, and performs the complete circuit of the heavens once in every month; that is to say, she moves to the eastward through the heavens at the average rate of about 13 degrees a-day, or somewhat more than half a degree an hour. Thus her apparent motion amongst the stars is about one minute of space in two minutes of Time; and this, which is a rate of movement distinctly

perceptible even to the naked eye under some circumstances, is always observable with the instruments in use at sea. The consequence is, that whenever the sky is clear, and the Moon up, we can ascertain, at any given moment of time, by actual observation, her exact place in the heavens relatively to the sun or planets, or stars lying in her path. We then refer to the Nautical Almanac, an ephemeris in which the Moon's place has been previously computed by astronomers, and there we discover the Greenwich Time at which it has been predicted that she will reach the point in the heavens we have observed her to occupy at the moment of 'taking the lunar,' as it is called. Having likewise ascertained what was the 'ship's Time' at the same instant, by other observations made on board, we ascertain their difference by subtracting one from the other, (precisely as in the case of the chronometer), and we arrive at the difference of longitude between the ship and Greenwich.

Dr. Wollaston's remark, that the Moon is the hand of a great Greenwich clock in the sky, will now, I think, readily be un-

derstood. All that we require of our chronometers, indeed, or of the Moon, is to tell us the Time, or hour of the day, at Greenwich, while, by means of other instruments, we determine the Time, or hour of the day, at the ship at the very same moment. These two Times being known, the ship's place on the globe at that moment, so far as longitude is concerned, becomes known likewise, by simply taking their difference and converting it into longitude, at the rate of 15° to each hour.

To make this matter perfectly clear, one more illustration will suffice. Let it be supposed that the clock at Greenwich were to strike so loud as to be heard over the whole globe at the same moment, (and suppose the allowance for the slow rate of sound out of the question), then any navigator, who had the means of ascertaining by observation the Time at his ship, at any given moment, would be able to ascertain his longitude, by comparing the Time so found with that derived from hearing the Greenwich clock strike the hour. Now the Moon answers—and answers admirably—the same purpose to the eye as the

sound of the clock would to the ear ; both give the time of the day at Greenwich, which is all we require to have given us, either by chronometer or by the Moon. The rest we can find by observation for ourselves.

The Latitude of the ship, or her distance north or south of the equator, is determined by a much simpler and totally independent process. It will easily be understood, that if there had happened to be a brilliant star fixed in the pole of the heavens, or that point to which the axis of the earth points, this star would have been seen by Captain Parry directly over his head had he reached the pole of the earth ; and, for similar reasons, the same star would be seen in the horizon by any one when crossing the equator. There happens not to be any star exactly in either pole ; but that does not essentially matter, since, if we know what is called the Polar distance, that is, how far any star is distant from that point, we can easily make allowances to our observed altitudes, and come at the truth with as much precision, and almost as much facility, as if a blazing star really

were permanently lighted up for us in the very pole itself. In practice, we have merely to watch till the sun, moon, planets, or some one of the numerous bright objects whose places in the heavens have been well ascertained, comes to the meridian of the ship; we then measure, by a sextant, its altitude or angular elevation above the horizon, and having applied to that angle the correction due to the star's known distance from the pole, we come at the latitude required. I need not repeat that, were the star which we observe situated actually in the pole, no such correction would be necessary. This may be repeated with other stars throughout the night, though many navigators content themselves with observing the sun's altitude at noon for the latitude. I used always to make my middies determine the ship's latitude in their respective night-watches, and write the result on the log-board, as a current matter of duty.

The exact moment of noon, it may be thought, is the only one at which the sun's altitude ought to be taken for determining the latitude; and so in strictness it is. But

the change of altitude during about half an hour before, or half an hour after noon, is so small, and its rate of variation so well known, that if the ship's Time, which is generally known near enough, be only carefully noted by watch, while repeated observations of the sun's altitude are taken during the twenty minutes before and after noon, the latitude may be determined with nearly as much precision as if the exact meridian observation had been obtained.

Of course, navigators of any practical experience will smile at the A, B, C nature of some of these explanations; but my wish is to be useful to persons who have not had much experience. I have so many times seen the latitude lost because the meridian observation was not obtained, at moments, too, when it was of some consequence to ascertain the ship's place, and when it might easily have been obtained, that I venture to recommend all my brother-officers to attend to this point. Instead of summoning a crowd of idle gaping fellows on the gangway 'to take the sun at noon,' let each of them observe several altitudes of the sun first before

and then after noon, and let him reduce these to the meridian by the methods they have all been taught, but seldom practise. Do not allow the master to tell them the true latitude, which we shall suppose he will ascertain by the meridian observation; but let us see how nearly the young fellows, without going below, will separately bring out their results. The master himself ought, in like manner, to commence taking altitudes and noting the time at least five and twenty minutes before noon; none of which need be worked out if he succeeds in observing the sun at its greatest altitude, or when it just passes the meridian. If, however, he loses that transient observation, he ought to continue making others for nearly half an hour after noon, carefully noting the time at each. The same rule applies with even greater simplicity of computation to the stars; and accordingly I can safely say, that I have seldom remained at sea twenty-four consecutive hours, in any climate, without obtaining the latitude, if I wished anxiously to know the ship's place.

It is very curious, but very true, that

the extreme simplicity of the methods of ascertaining the latitude at sea, both at night and in the day-time, compared with the operose and delicate operations necessary for finding the longitude, give to the longitude an importance which it is by no means entitled to claim relatively to the latitude. One is exactly as material as the other, with this great difference in practice, that if the sky be clear, the latitude may easily be determined half-a-dozen times during every hour of the night, whereas the longitude by lunars can be gained only when the moon is above the horizon, and when she is at a particular age. By the help of a chronometer, indeed, the longitude may be corrected almost as often as the latitude; and navigators are much too remiss in using stars for the purpose of determining their Time at ship. If advantage be taken of the half hour, or three quarters of an hour after the sun is well below the horizon, or before he rises again in the morning, the altitude of stars may be observed with great precision by using the inverting telescope of the sextant; and if during the same period

the meridian altitude of two or three stars be observed, the ship's place, both in latitude and longitude, may be settled very accurately.

I venture again to recommend my brother-officers in command to make their young gentlemen observe the latitude regularly at these periods, and also to acquire the habit of taking sights for the chronometer with the stars. Some of them will, no doubt, growl exceedingly (in their births) at me for having suggested any thing of this kind, but the time may come when they may not be sorry to have been thoroughly drilled, by actual practice, in operations upon which the safety of their ships may essentially depend, or the quickness and efficiency of their voyage be determined. It is surely needless to point out the importance, as far as security is concerned, of knowing correctly our place on the surface of the ocean, or to dwell upon the vast consequence of which that knowledge may prove to the public service. I remember one occasion in particular when a knowledge of the latitude was very useful to me when in command of a ship.

We were running for the British Channel before a hard south-west gale, and it was of considerable importance that we should reach some port in England without delay, for we were not only charged with despatches, but were very short of provisions and water. The only chronometer I had on board happened not to be very good, and the sky had been so completely overcast for more than a week before, that we could take no lunars. Thus I felt uncertain of my longitude, to the extent of a degree at least; and all who have tried the experiment know what a nervous thing it is to run in for the land, in the dark, and in stormy weather, when the ship's place is not correctly known. But I felt exceedingly loath to lose so magnificent a wind, before which we spun along at the rate of ten knots, under a reefed foresail and close-reefed maintop-sail. As long as daylight lasted I felt very confident and bold about the matter; but as the night closed in, the doubts and difficulties of the Channel navigation crowded round my thoughts, and almost determined me to bring the ship to, and

wait for the dawn. After poring for a long while over the chart, however, I satisfied myself that if, by any means, I could be sure of keeping in the latitude of $50\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$, or within ten or a dozen miles on either side of that parallel, I should have clear ground to run over for three degrees of longitude at least, greatly within which I felt sure that the error of my chronometer must lie. But how was I to determine this point with any degree of certainty in such weather? The sky had not shewed a patch of blue as large as my hand for several days, and though the sun had been seen through the clouds occasionally, we had not succeeded in catching a meridian observation.

In this dilemma I bethought me of the pole-star, proverbially the mariner's friend, and having fixed my sextant by the cabin light at the angle about which I knew the latitude must give the altitude of the pole, I cast my boat cloak over my shoulder, and went on deck. There I stationed myself on the larboard side of the quarter-deck, with the instrument sheltered from the rain and spray under the cloak, and

grasped in my right hand, while I kept my eye fixed on that part of the heavens in which I hoped, at some momentary opening, to detect the bright star of my night's fortunes. I had to wait more than an hour before there occurred any thing like a chance, by which time my limbs had become cramped and stiffened by the constraint of one posture, while my eye ached and throbbed with its vain attempts to pierce the thick courses of clouds sweeping past.

At last I did get sight of the star, for three or four seconds, and though it glimmered so faintly through the mist that it could hardly have been identified as Polaris even by Sir James South himself, I knew by its altitude that it must be the object I was watching for. The horizon was but a shabby one, indistinctly seen in the dark, and hacked by the topping waves like the Sierra Morena. Nevertheless, I succeeded in bringing the star in contact with the edge of the sea in the north, where, fortunately, there chanced at that moment to occur a faint gleam in the lower atmosphere.

I ran below, read off the angle, computed the latitude, and found it not more than twenty miles from what I had expected, and quite enough to keep the ship safe for some hours' run. But as one insulated observation, made under such circumstances, could not be depended upon, I hastened on deck again, and presently—that is in less than half an hour—caught a second glimpse of my friendly light-house in the sky. The result agreed with that of the first observation within ten miles, and of course gave me greater confidence.

Still, as the night was dark, the horizon bad, and the observations both to the north, I could not rely upon them to the extent which was desirable, I may say indispensable, in running for the Channel in such a night and at such a rate. So I cast about to fish for a star on the southern side of the zenith, and was rejoiced to find that a brilliant planet, either Jupiter or Saturn, I forget which, came to the meridian before midnight. On deck I went again, sextant in hand, and although I possessed no very certain means of telling 'the Time at ship,' I watched for the planet,

and caught it for a moment not very far from the meridian, as I knew by the 'compass bearing.' With a flushed cheek, and hand trembling so that I could scarcely hold the pencil, I worked out the latitude, and found it to differ from the mean of the two results by the pole-star rather less than twenty miles. A second cast at the planet, after it had passed the meridian a few minutes, gave, when properly reduced, a latitude which differed only five or six miles from the first. Putting all these observations together, I felt quite certain that the ship's path lay within the limits marked along the chart as a safe track, and having given orders to shake out a reef, pressed forward as fast as masts, yards, and hull would bear.

The ever-welcome dawn at length appeared, and not long afterwards I had the infinite satisfaction of discovering from the deck the well-known Lizard Point, with its two light-houses, streaming with the night's rain, one above the other, and shining brightly in the morning sun.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S EMBARKATION AT
PORTSMOUTH IN THE AUTUMN OF 1831.

Of all the voyages and travels I ever made in my life, the most interesting by far was a trip to Portsmouth, when I had the honour of attending Sir Walter Scott, to assist him in his embarkation for Italy. The circumstances were quite accidental which led to my being employed in so delightful a manner, as rendering even the slightest services to an author who has laid the whole world under such deep obligations.

The extraordinary interest which the public feel in every thing relating to this wonderful man induces me to believe that a simple narrative of the mere facts connected with his embarkation may to many prove acceptable. In due season, it is to be hoped, his accomplished son-in-law

will favour the world with a complete life of Sir Walter Scott; and as it is impossible to suppose that any person can have enjoyed such ample means of studying his character, and making himself acquainted with his unedited writings, as Mr. Lockhart, we may reasonably expect a work of the highest description of literary and philosophical interest, from opportunities so favourable in the hands of a writer of taste, genius, and cultivated talents.

In the summer of 1831, it became but too well known to the public that Sir Walter Scott had suffered greatly from more than one severe attack of illness; and towards the autumn of that year it was generally understood that his medical attendants in the north strongly recommended his going abroad. There occurred much difficulty, however, in arranging this matter. In the first place, Sir Walter himself, it appears, felt extremely unwilling to move from home. Perhaps he knew, quite as well as his doctors, that he had not long to live; and it is certain that he experienced a strong wish not to breathe his last away from his beloved

Abbotsford—which, like one of his romantic novels, might be called the creation of his own hands! In the next place, the state of his bodily health rendered a long journey by land inexpedient, especially over the rough roads of France and Italy; and still further to add to the difficulty, great doubts arose if any of the ordinary sea conveyances would be likely to prove more suitable. The most favourable resource, and one which seemed obvious to every person but the Great Unknown himself, was a passage in a ship of war; but as he felt the strongest reluctance to making any application for such a favour, his friends in Scotland were reduced to an exceedingly awkward dilemma. The physicians, however, continued positively to declare, that Sir Walter must, by some means or other, be removed from Abbotsford, if he were to have the smallest chance of recovery. So long as he remained at home, it was clear to them, and to every one else, that his incessant literary exertions were only augmenting the alarming disease under which he was suffering.

At last, one of his most intimate friends, Mr. Robert Cadell, the publisher of his works, wrote to consult me confidentially on the occasion, entreating me to discover in what way a passage in a ship of war going to the Mediterranean might be obtained. Owing to some accident, it was late in the day before this letter was delivered to me; but, although it was long past office hours, I thought it would be wrong to stand upon etiquettes when the health of such a man was at stake. As the shortest way, therefore, of settling this pressing matter, I walked straight to the Admiralty, where I was told that the first lord, Sir James Graham, had gone to his room to dress for dinner, and could not be seen. Nevertheless, I took the liberty of writing him a short note, stating that I had just received a communication from a friend of Sir Walter Scott's, the contents of which I felt extremely desirous of communicating to him without delay, from a belief that his assistance on this occasion might essentially contribute to preserve one of the most valuable lives in the country.

As I anticipated, Sir James received me instantly ; and even before I had time to read half through the letter from Scotland, he assured me, that whatever was considered likely to promote Sir Walter Scott's recovery, should undoubtedly be granted by government. On my stating the afflicting details of the case, he mentioned that, as a ship was shortly to sail for Malta, a passage in her might be considered certain.

“ How the details are to be arranged,” added Sir James, “ is of no great consequence. Leave all that to me. I am personally well acquainted with Captain Pigot of the *Barham*, which is the frigate going to the Mediterranean, and therefore, at all events, I can manage it as a private favour, should any unexpected official difficulties occur. In the meantime, as it seems to be important that Sir Walter should have as much leisure to prepare as possible, and as the ship is actually under sailing orders, I beg you will write to him at once ; and pray make an effort to save to-night's post. Say to Sir Walter that his passage shall be arranged in the man-

ner most agreeable to his wishes, and that he may set out on his journey south as soon as he can make it convenient to do so, certain that all things shall be got in readiness for him."

I wrote a letter to Sir Walter accordingly, which, by help of a swift cab, I succeeded in getting into the General Post-office at half-past seven. This was on the 13th of September.

Next day, it appears to have occurred to Sir James Graham, that although Captain Pigot, or any other officer in the Navy, would, of course, have been delighted to give Sir Walter Scott a passage in his ship, it might not be altogether agreeable to Sir Walter himself to lie under such extensive personal obligations to a perfect stranger. At least, I infer, from the following note to me, that such were Sir James Graham's reflections.

(Private.)

"Admiralty, Sept. 15, 1831.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have received the commands of his Majesty to order a free passage in the *Barham* to Malta for Sir Walter Scott

and his daughter; and I have had the greatest pleasure in communicating to Sir Walter himself, the gracious terms in which his Majesty was pleased to convey his consent on this occasion.

“ I have been sincerely glad of an opportunity of evincing my respect for Sir Walter on this occasion; and I thank you for giving me the information which has enabled me to prove the sincerity of these feelings. Very faithfully yours,

“ (Signed) J. R. G. GRAHAM.

“ CAPTAIN BASIL HALL.”

If it afforded so much pleasure to the First Lord of the Admiralty and others, who were merely the channels of communication through which the royal favour circulated from the throne to the most distinguished of its subjects, we may conceive the satisfaction with which our kind-hearted monarch himself exercised his power. And, probably, there never was an act of condescension more universally or more justly applauded throughout the country.

Had a similar fate befallen Shakspeare, and had his health in his latter years required the renovating aid of a sea voyage, with what gratitude would not all posterity have looked back to the kindness and sagacity of ‘good Queen Bess,’ had she, like our present gracious sovereign, anticipated the wishes of her subjects and their descendants, by placing a ship of war at the great poet’s command! That the Author of *Waverley* will be viewed by our posterity in no small degree as we now view Shakspeare, there can be little doubt; and, probably, there will be handed down to future times no circumstance better calculated to afford lasting gratification, than the generous conduct of his Majesty upon this occasion. Well might the following lines of Lord Byron, forming part of his beautiful sonnet to George IV., be addressed to his successor:

“Dismiss thy guard, and trust thee to such traits!
For who would raise a hand except to bless?
Were it not easy, Sir, and is’t not sweet,
To make thyself beloved?”

Who can forget the sensation produced at the time, by the delicacy and good taste

with which the interests and convenience of a private individual were thus gracefully converted into a public concern? Every one, indeed, appeared really to feel as if a personal favour had been done to himself: and, certainly, no monarch ever gained more genuine popularity than was accorded to William IV. for this well-timed attention to the wishes of the country.

Sir Walter, from the first, had been very averse to any application being made from him to government, so that he was much relieved by understanding that the whole affair was the spontaneous and hearty act of the highest authorities, the instant it was suggested to them that his health might be benefited by the proposed change of air. At bottom, it is probable that this diffidence on his part arose more from his secret reluctance to root himself up from his house and home, his dearly beloved black-letter library, his musty papers, and his cherished plantations, in which he took infinitely more delight than in all the society and scenery of the rest of the world besides. If, indeed, he would

have consented to desist from over-working his mind, and could have been prevailed upon to agree for a time to pass his days in rambling about the rising woods of Abbotsford, every tree of which was planted by himself, it would have been the most cruel thing imaginable to have sought to move him from home. But, in the fervour of his manly anxiety to fulfil his pecuniary engagements, he considered each hour mispent which did not directly contribute to the accomplishment of that noble end.

At last, this eager desire to work himself out of debt seemed to have become a sort of fascination which he could not resist. One day, Dr. Abercrombie of Edinburgh, (than whom none can more ably ‘minister to the mind diseased’) urged upon him the necessity of greater moderation in his mental labours :

“ Sir Walter,” said the kind physician, “ you must not write so constantly ; really, sir, you must not work.”

“ I tell you what it is, doctor,” said the Author of Waverley,—“ Molly, when she

puts the kettle on, might just as well say, ' Kettle — kettle, don't boil ! ' ”

What the result might have proved had no change of residence taken place, it is perhaps idle now to consider. It is sufficient to know, that the reiterated and earnest recommendations of the ablest medical men in the country were fully acted upon ; and that Sir Walter, with many a sigh, but, I suspect, no great hopes of amendment, set out from Abbotsford, and, after an easy journey, reached London.

As I had been in some degree the proximate cause of his coming to town, I instantly waited on him, and offered my services to accompany the party to Portsmouth to assist in the embarkation. A free passage, indeed, had been ordered ; and I knew Captain Pigot of the *Barham* to be, of all the officers of the Navy, one of the very best suited to do the honours to such a guest ; yet experience had shewn me, that on such occasions there are many little odds and ends relating to the outfit of passengers which cannot be fully understood by a perfect stranger to ship matters, but which minute details it was scarcely

fair to expect the captain to attend to at the busiest of all busy moments, when preparing his ship for sea.

Sir Walter at first declined my offer, saying that he had already given me and all his other friends a great deal too much trouble. It was impossible to make him understand that what might have been considered indifferent or even troublesome in any other case, must become a high honour as well as a pleasure in his. Nor do I think he would even at the last have accepted my services, had it not been for an accidental difficulty that arose in London, for the solution of which he called me in. Some friend who, with the best intentions, no doubt, must have been totally ignorant of the state of feeling in the Navy, had, it appears, suggested to Sir Walter the propriety of his making the captain of the ship some present at the end of the voyage.

“Now,” said he, in some perplexity, “is this right? Is it usual in such cases? and, if so, what am I to give? It looks odd, I confess,” he added, “but I wish to do all that is proper.”

I of course informed him that such a thing was not only unusual and improper, but that the effect would inevitably be the very reverse of what was intended, and, so far from gratifying his host, would inevitably offend him. He looked mightily puzzled, and at last said,

“ But may I not give the captain a copy of the *Waverley Novels*, for instance, with an autograph inscription ?”

I assured him he might do this with great propriety and safety, but repeated my advice to him to keep clear of all such presents as a pipe of Madeira, or a hogshead of sherry, which had been suggested to him. This communication appeared to relieve him so much, that, thinking I might again be useful to him, I took advantage of the opportunity to repeat my offer to accompany him to Portsmouth, adding, that I thought he ought to take me at my word, were it only to give convoy back again to those ladies of his family who did not accompany him further. This he accordingly agreed to, and on Sunday morning, the 23d of October, 1831, the party left town, in as rainy,

windy, and melancholy a day as ever was seen.

No particular adventures occurred on the way, except that at one of the stages, Guildford, I think, where a short halt was made, a blind horse, when turning suddenly into the stable-yard, pushed right against Sir Walter, threw him violently to the ground, and had well-nigh killed him on the spot! What a fate would this have been, had the Author of *Waverley*—perhaps the foremost man of all the world—been trodden to death by a decayed post-horse! And yet who shall say that, upon the whole, even such a catastrophe might not have proved a blessed exemption from much subsequent suffering and sorrow, at which the nations wept?

The mysterious influences of disease strike at the mind not less surely, though often more slowly, than those which destroy the body. Of this fatal progress he was himself probably aware, for when he related this incident to me next morning, though his account was touched with his wonted humour, I saw, or almost fancied I saw, in his tone and manner, a trace of

regret that he had escaped a swifter destruction than that which, I verily believe, he even then fully knew was darkly overtaking him.

In order to have all things ready for Sir Walter's reception, I hastened forward to Portsmouth in the Rocket coach, and having found the principal inn, the George, quite full, engaged rooms for him at the Fountain. Mr. Nance, the landlord, and the other worthy folks there, who had little expected such an honour, were so enchanted, that they prevailed on one whole family to turn out of their rooms, in order the better to accommodate Sir Walter's party.

Next morning, Captain Pigot waited on him, as he said, to receive orders, and to beg him to consider that every officer, man, and boy in the Barham, was solicitous, above all things, to render his passage agreeable. Sir Walter was much pleased with the frankness of these offers, but declared he knew nothing at all about a ship, and must trust to those of his friends who did. Upon which Captain Pigot asked the ladies if they would like to go on board the frigate to see the accommo-

dations. But as the weather was rather rough, this was declined, and I undertook the first visit on their account.

I found that on each side of the ship a most commodious set of cabins had been put up by order of the Admiralty. Although these apartments had been very handsomely furnished by Captain Pigot, and were nearly ready for the party, he begged me again and again to look over every thing, and point out what was still wanted, stating that he would reckon it the greatest favour if I would consider him completely at Sir Walter's service. As, however, he was then exceedingly busy, he requested I would take every opportunity of discovering Sir Walter's wishes, and put them in train, without consulting him.

"This," said he, "will answer the same end, and perhaps it will even be more agreeable to my illustrious guest. Do, therefore, oblige me," continued this considerate and kind-hearted officer, "by finding out either from himself or from the ladies of his family, any thing and every thing that will add to his comfort on the

voyage, and let me know it; or if I be not in the way, apply to the first lieutenant, who will attend implicitly to all your suggestions. By the way, cannot you see any thing now," said he, "to remark upon? Is there nothing in these arrangements which Sir Walter might find inconvenient?"

As Captain Pigot seemed so desirous that I should remark something to add or to alter, I cast my eyes about to discover defects where every thing seemed perfect. At last I said, "It strikes me that these little gratings which form the steps of your quarter-deck ladder will bother Sir Walter, who is so dependent upon his stick, that if the point of it goes into one of these holes, he may tumble down headforemost on the main deck."

Captain Pigot merely turned to the first lieutenant and said, "Mr. Walker, will you attend to that?" But before I left the ship, and indeed almost before I could have supposed the planks planed, I found the gratings gone, and solid boards substituted in their stead.

It was the same with every thing else,

and a sort of magical celerity appeared to belong to the execution of Sir Walter's slightest wish, or supposition of a wish.

Many people may not be aware that there are certain things which it is usual for passengers to provide themselves with, even though ordered a free passage in a ship of war ; such as beds, sheeting, and various other minor articles of furniture. These, with the captain's permission, I took care to send on board without troubling Sir Walter. When all was completed, Captain Pigot prevailed on the ladies to take a final survey of the accommodations, in order to discover whether, by possibility, any thing had been omitted which seemed calculated to be useful or agreeable to them on their passage. The orders of the Admiralty, however, had been so precise ; the dock-yard people had worked so well ; and the captain and officers of the ship had taken so much pains with all the details ; that not the smallest omission could be spied out. We had only therefore to corroborate the captain's report to Sir Walter, that all was ready for him to embark whenever the wind should shift.

While these things were going on afloat, every person on shore seemed to vie with his neighbour in doing honour to the illustrious stranger. The lieutenant-governor, Sir Colin Campbell, and the other local authorities, called upon him almost as if he had been a royal personage, to place at his disposal all the means in their power to render his stay at Portsmouth pleasant. The port-admiral, Sir Thomas Foley, waited on him to say, that his yacht, the Sylph, and the flag-ship's barge, were at his orders, should he or his family wish to sail about. The commissioner, also, Sir Michael Seymour, offered his services, and begged to know if there was any thing in the dock-yard which he wished to see.

“ I am so weak myself,” said Sir Walter, “ that I cannot hope to visit your establishment ; but I believe some of my family are anxious to see an anchor made.”

Nothing more passed, but next day a message was received to say that a large anchor was to be forged, if the ladies would name the hour.

The Lords of the Admiralty happened to be at Portsmouth on a tour of inspection, and they too waited upon Sir Walter to learn if any thing further could be done to meet his wishes. An idea at that time prevailed that an armament was about to be fitted out against Holland, or, at all events, it was supposed the ships at Spithead and Plymouth might be called away to rendezvous at the Downs. When this news came, I remember thinking that I had detected a lurking sort of hope on Sir Walter's part, that the frigate prepared for his reception would be one of those ordered away, and that he might thus have an excuse for not leaving the country. To the measure of removing him from home, indeed, as far as I could see, he never gave his hearty concurrence, though he submitted to the positive dictation of his physicians, and the earnest entreaties of his friends. This glimpse of hope of an interruption to his banishment, as I heard him call it once, and only once, was demolished by a demi-official notification from the high authorities charged with the regulation of such affairs, who hap-

pened to be still present, that the Barham should not be diverted from her original destination except in the last extremity, for while there could be found another available ship in England, Sir Walter Scott might reckon on nothing interfering with his plans.

I observed a very slight shrug of the shoulders, and a transient expression of provocation in his countenance, as this flattering message was delivered to him; but it instantly passed off, and he expressed himself in the highest degree flattered by such attention. It is pleasing and instructive to recollect, that from the hour of this communication to the moment of his sailing, his spirits appeared to recover their wonted elasticity. The evil—so he had viewed the necessity of leaving home—was now inevitable, and he made up his mind to meet it; though I am persuaded he had not the slightest hope of deriving any benefit from the voyage. I one day heard him mention how curious it was that two of our greatest novelists had gone abroad only to die—Fielding and Smollet. And the same evening he asked

me to step over to Mr. Harrison the bookseller's to get for him Fielding's Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon. "That little book," said he, "the last he wrote, is one of the most entertaining and wittiest of all Fielding's productions, though written during a period of great pain and sickness. Indeed," he continued, "I hardly know any more amusing book of travels than Fielding has contrived to compose out of a subject apparently so scanty and threadbare as a voyage down the Thames, through the Downs to St. Helen's Roads, and then across the Bay of Biscay."

One day, speaking of the Knights of Malta, he begged me to send for a history of that island ; and as the waiter was going off to the bookseller's, some one called out, "Tell Mr. Harrison to send over also any amusing works he has at hand."

"If we do not take care," said another, "they will send us a pile of the Waverley Novels."

"Ay!" cried out the Author himself, "that would be sending coals to Newcastle indeed!"

Nothing could be more good-natured

than the manner in which he allowed himself to be made the lion. The Portsmouth Philosophical Society, feeling naturally desirous to enrol such a name on their list of members, wrote to request that honour. By some accident, however, the deputation charged with this communication arrived at the Fountain Inn when Sir Walter was in the middle of dinner.

“ Shall I say that you will receive them by and by, sir ?” I asked, “ or to-morrow morning ?”

“ O no,” said he, “ they may feel disappointed—or perhaps they may have a meeting to-night—shew them in, I pray.”

In they came accordingly ; and as the opportunity was too good to be omitted of getting a sight of Sir Walter Scott, the deputation of philosophers was by no means a small one. He talked, however, to each of these gentlemen, appeared to take the greatest interest in the history of their town and its curiosities ; and having drank a glass of wine with them, and shaken hands with each, he dismissed them enchanted with his urbanity and good-nature.

One day, when the ladies were setting out to return the visit of Lady and the Miss Seymours in the dock-yard, he said,

“Some of you write my name on a card, and leave it with Sir Michael Seymour for me, as I cannot conveniently go so far. No—stay,” cried he, with one of his sly looks of good humour at his own ingenuity, “give me the pen—I’ll write it myself—the young ladies may wish to have it as an autograph.”

Though Sir Walter walked but little, and with some difficulty, he appeared to have no objection to seeing company. The Fountain accordingly overflowed all day long. Every mortal that could by any means get an introduction, and some even without, paid their respects; and during the last three days, when his spirits revived, he had something to say to every visitor. He declined seeing no one, and never shewed any thing but the most cordial good-will, even to those who came professedly to see the show. One day an old acquaintance of mine, a seaman of the name of Bailey, the admiral’s messenger, after much humming and hawing, and

excuse-making, asked whether it were possible for him to get a sight of Sir Walter Scott, "in order to hear him speak." Nothing, I told him, was more easy; for when, as usual, he brought the letters from the post-office, he had only to send up word to say, that he wished to deliver them in person. Next morning, accordingly, the waiter said to me at the breakfast-table, "Bailey, sir, says he must deliver Sir Walter's letters to himself, and that you told him so." Sir Walter looked towards me and laughed; but when the honest fellow's wishes were explained, he desired him to be sent up, and, shaking hands with him, said, "I hope you are satisfied now you have heard me speak."

"I sent three men off yesterday, sir," said Bailey, "to enter for the Barham—all because you are going in her."

"They'll at all events find a good ship and a good captain, that I am very sure of," replied Sir Walter.

"That's something of a compliment certainly," he continued, when the door was shut; "but I hold that the greatest honour yet which has been paid to my

celebrity was by a fishmonger in London last week, who was applied to by the servant of the house in which I was living for some cod, I believe, for dinner; but it being rather late in the day, there was none left. On the servant's mentioning who it was wanted for, the fishmonger said that altered the matter, and that if a bit was to be had in London for love or money, it should be at my disposal. Accordingly, the man himself actually walked up with the fish all the way from Billingsgate to Sussex Place, in the Regent's Park. Now, if that is not substantial literary reputation, I know not what is!"

Sir Walter's health was such that he could take but little exercise. He complained chiefly of weakness in his legs; but he managed generally once a day to walk for about half an hour on the ramparts between the platform and the south-east bastion, that on which the flag-staff is planted. He used generally to rise between six and seven, and then to come to the drawing-room, where he commenced writing his diary in a thick quarto book

bound in calf-skin. I took care always to be up and dressed before he left his room, ready to give him my arm, without which assistance he found it difficult at times to get along. I saw him once attempt to walk, without even his stick, from the breakfast table to that on which his writing-desk stood; but he made poor work of it, and I heard him say, as he crept along, with more bitterness of tone than usually entered into his expressions, "It is hard enough (or odd enough) that I should now be just beginning again, at sixty years of age, what I left off, after my severe illness, at ten."

He said to me one morning, pointing to his MS. book, "Do you keep a diary? I suppose, of course, you have kept one all your life?" I mentioned what my practice had been in that respect, and added something about the difficulty of writing any thing while engaged with the printer's devils.

"Ay! ay! that's true," he ejaculated, with a sigh—"too true. For I fear that a great part of my present illness has been brought on by too much working. Let

me warn you, captain, it is a very dangerous thing to over-work."

He then began a conversation about his affairs; and upon my accidentally mentioning the name of his publisher, Mr. Robert Cadell of Edinburgh, he said, with another sigh, "Ah! if I had been in our excellent friend Cadell's hands during all the course of my writing for the public, I should now undoubtedly have been worth a couple of hundred thousand pounds, instead of having to work myself to pieces to get out of debt."

I ventured to remark, that, but for the illness of which he spoke, it was perhaps all the better; for, ever since the period of his difficulties, he had been influenced by a more generous and disinterested motive for exertion than any which a mere wish to make money could supply.

"Perhaps so," he answered; "no writer should ever make money his sole object, or even his chief object. Money-making is not the proper business of a man of letters. Yet, on the other hand, the professed money-making gentlemen (my creditors I mean) must admit, that although

I have been working in their line lately, it has been for their benefit, not my own. In fact, as I said before, I think I have overdone the thing, and may have brought on some of this illness by excess of mental exertion. Where it will all end, I know not. I am giving myself a chance, I understand, by making this journey—and one can die any where.”

“It occurs to me,” I observed, “that people are apt to make too much fuss about the loss of fortune, which is one of the smallest of the great evils of life, and ought to be among the most tolerable.”

“Do you call it a small misfortune to be ruined in money matters?” he asked.

“It is not so painful, at all events, as the loss of friends.”

“I grant that,” he said.

“As the loss of character?”

“True again.”

“As the loss of health?”

“Ay, there you have me,” he muttered to himself, in a tone so melancholy that I wished I had not spoken.

“What is the loss of fortune to the loss of peace of mind?” I continued.

“ In short,” said he playfully, “ you will make it out that there is no harm in a man’s being plunged over head and ears in a debt he cannot remove.”

“ Much depends, I think, on how it was incurred, and what efforts are made to redeem it—at least, if the sufferer be a right-minded man.”

“ I hope it does,” he said, cheerfully and firmly.

In order to give the subject a bend towards something less serious, I observed, that I thought a whitlow on the tip of an author’s fore-finger on the right hand (which was my case at the moment) was no small misfortune.

“ Yes,” remarked Sir Walter; “ for it certainly is any thing but an amusement to write with the left hand.”

It may be interesting to persons engaged in literary pursuits to mention, that several years before the period of which I am now speaking, when Sir Walter Scott dined with me in Edinburgh, I took an opportunity of asking him how many hours a-day he could write for the press with effect.

“ I reckon,” he answered, “ five hours

and a half a-day as very good work for the mind, when it is engaged in original composition. I can very seldom reach six hours; and I suspect that what is written after five or six hours' hard mental labour is not worth much."

I asked him how he divided these hours.

"I try to get two or three of them before breakfast," he said, "and the remainder as soon after as may be, so as to leave the afternoon free to walk or ride, or read, or be idle."

This conversation, it is material to observe, took place in Edinburgh, before Sir Walter gave up his office as Clerk of Session, and his answers, I suspect, referred chiefly to those holiday portions of the year which he spent at Abbotsford when the court was not sitting. But, from something he said at the time, I was led to infer that he adopted the same limitations on his mental labours even when fixed in Edinburgh by the law courts. The duties of his office being of a light or mechanical nature, which required no great effort of thought, were probably not taken into the calculation.

But after he quitted the Court of Session, and was left completely free, I have reason to believe that his intense and chivalrous anxiety to disentangle himself from debts, which would have driven most other men to despair, led him greatly to exceed the judicious limits he formerly considered necessary, not only to his health, but, according to his own shewing, to the good quality of his writings. I have even heard, that, latterly, with the same noble spirit, he sometimes actually worked for ten, twelve, and even fourteen hours a-day, instead of five or six! And from many expressions he let fall at Portsmouth, I am satisfied that he ascribed the demolition of his health mainly to this cause.

I have already mentioned, that during the last three days of his detention at Portsmouth by contrary winds, Sir Walter rallied or plucked up, as it is called, amazingly; looked and talked with cheerfulness, cracked his jokes, and told his old stories, with almost as much brilliancy as I ever remember to have witnessed before. He began about that time also to speak of the voyage with interest, and his eye

sparkled as in old times, when he mentioned the probability of his visiting the pyramids of Egypt, and perhaps Athens and Constantinople. At such moments, and while he was sitting down, a stranger might have imagined there was nothing the matter with him; but when he rose, or attempted to rise, his weakness became distressingly manifest. One evening, after he had been chatting for an hour with the greatest vivacity, he expressed a wish to retire; but although I gave him my arm, and did all I could to assist him, it was not till the third attempt that he gained his feet. While endeavouring to rise, he muttered, "This weakness increases on me, confound it!" And after a pause, he added, "It is rather hard, that just at the moment—at the very first moment of my whole life, that I could call myself free to go any where or do any thing I pleased, I should be knocked up in this style, and prevented from even crossing the street, were the greatest curiosity in the world placed there."

Next morning, however, the 28th of October, when I was sitting in the draw-

ing-room, about half-past six or seven o'clock, in he stepped stoutly enough; and waving his stick, he called to me to give him my arm, as the morning was fine, that he might take a walk on the ramparts. On reaching the platform, he turned round and said,

“Now shew me the exact spot where Jack the painter was hanged.”

I pointed out the locality, now occupied by a post or pilot-beacon on the inner part of Blockhouse Point, on which I remembered having seen Jack's bones hanging in chains more than nine-and-twenty years before, when I first went to sea as a wee middy. He seemed so familiar with all Jack the painter's exploits, and especially his setting fire to the dock-yard, that I asked if he had been reading about him lately. “Not for these last thirty or forty years, certainly,” he answered.

As we strolled along the ramparts, he looked often towards Spithead, and at last he stopped, and desired me to shew him where the celebrated Royal William used to lie during the war.

“Where did the Royal George go down?” he next asked.

I pointed out to him the buoy ; upon which, as if taxing his memory, he murmured, in a voice scarcely audible, a line or so of Cowper's verses on that melancholy catastrophe ;—

“ His fingers held the pen, his sword ”——

“ No ! ” said he, correcting himself, “ that won't do ”——

“ His sword was in its sheath—
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.”

He was in great glee during the whole of this walk, and told some five or six of his best stories, and all in his very best manner. Most of these, indeed, I had heard before ; but their dress was new, and their points were as sharp as ever. One, however, he told about himself, which I had not heard till then, though I think it has since been published in one of the volumes of the new edition of the *Waverley* Novels. At the age of two years, it seems, he was placed under the charge of a nursery-maid, and sent to his grand-uncle's in the country, for the benefit

of his health, he being then in a very feeble and ricketty state. "My ailments, however," he went on to relate, "were nearly being brought to a speedy conclusion, for my nurse, whose head appears to have been turned by some love craze or another, resolved to put me to death. In this view, she carried me to the moors, and having laid me on the heather, pulled out her scissors, and made the necessary preparations for cutting my throat."

"Well, sir," said I, astonished at the cool manner in which he described the process, "what deterred her?"

"I believe," replied he, "that the infant smiled in her face, and she could not go on."

"Would not this moment in the history of the Author of *Waverley* form a good subject for a picture?" said some one to whom I related the story. Which question, by the way, reminds me, that Sir Walter, most good-naturedly, allowed me one morning to make a set of Camera Lucida sketches of him standing, as he said, "with all his imperfections on his feet." My brother, Mr. James Hall, a young artist in London,

having conceived the novel and bold idea of representing Sir Walter exactly as he appeared in company, without any of the contrivances by which other painters have studiously concealed the defect of his right foot, he begged me to secure some careful jottings with the Camera for this purpose. I told Sir Walter the reason why I wished to sketch him, leg and all ; at which he laughed repeatedly, and said his young friend's idea was not a bad one. While I was putting the apparatus in order, he said to himself, " I wonder what sort of a defect it was that old Æsop had ?" I asked if his lameness had ever given him any inconvenience as a boy ? " No, scarcely any," he replied ; " I used to climb up and down all the most difficult parts of the Castle Rock of Edinburgh with any boy at the school."

Upon another occasion I heard him say, " An illness, when I was not above two years old, brought on this disagreeable lameness of mine," touching his foot with his stick as he spoke ; " and I remember quite well, that there was an idea that I might be cured by having my whole body wrapped up in a raw sheep's skin.

The unpleasant sensation caused by the contact of the skin, just taken from the animal's back and applied to my body, I shall never forget. I don't fancy it did me much good."

Immediately after breakfast, on the morning of the 29th of October, Captain Pigot landed from the *Barham*, to mention to Sir Walter Scott, that although the wind was not, strictly speaking, fair—inasmuch as it was a dead calm—yet he thought the opportunity should be taken to embark. Sir Walter was all compliance, and appeared, indeed, rejoiced to get away. "We have been kept here as prisoners at large during the last week, and I long to get into what you call blue water, Captain Pigot. Pray give my compliments to the commissioner, and say I shall feel obliged to him to send the barge which he offered, to take us on board."

But while he spoke, Mr. Gayton, the flag-lieutenant, came in with Admiral Sir Thomas Foley's compliments, to say, that on his hearing that the *Barham* was ready, and that Captain Pigot had gone to announce that it was time to embark, the

signal had been made to the *Britannia* to send her barge, to convey Sir Walter Scott and his family to Spithead.

He himself was soon ready; but the rest of the party, who had trunks to pack, and other dispositions to make, necessarily took longer time. Meanwhile, the Author of *Waverley* sat in the drawing-room in the highest spirits I ever remember to have seen him—chatting with every one who came in about his voyage, the beauty of the day, and the kindness of the King, the Admiralty, the admiral, the captain of his ship, and, in short, he exclaimed, laughing, “It is really quite ridiculous the fuss you are all making about one person.” Ever and anon, as any one came into the room to pick up things, he was sure to fire off some good-humoured scold about the sin of tardiness, and the proverbial length of time it took to get ladies under-weigh, with their endless bonnets and band-boxes. No one of us escaped, indeed, male or female. But there ran through all his observations such an air of humour and drollery, mixed occasionally with a slight dash of caustic sarcasm, in the funny style

of his own dear Antiquary, that the resemblance was at times complete. I never remember to have seen Sir Walter more cheerful, and even animated, than he was on the morning of his embarkation; and in fact, there appeared so little trace of illness, that the hopes of his ultimate and full recovery seemed, for the hour, to rest on surer foundations than ever.

At a little after eleven in the forenoon he stepped into the barge at the Sally Port, and was rowed off to Spithead in a most beautiful morning. The surface of the sea appeared to have tranquillised itself for the occasion—for I scarcely ever before saw Spithead, even in summer, so smooth or so completely without swell. The whole surface of the immense anchorage lay as polished in appearance as the speculum of a telescope, while the only ripple visible in any direction was that which glanced far off to the right and left from the oars, and from the barge's cutwater, as she glided, with a faint hissing noise, faster than I remember to have known a boat rowed before. For the men, who seemed well aware of the honour done them, gave way

together in such style, that their oars bent like bows, while Sir Walter pointed to the beauties of the Isle of Wight, looked long at Haslar Hospital, asked minutely about the pilotage round the different buoys on the shoals, and made us explain the distinction between the anchorages of St. Helen's, Spithead, and the Mother Bank. Nothing escaped him, and it was really quite satisfactory to see our venerable friend, at the hour of parting, apparently so light hearted and contented.

On reaching the Barham, we found, that although an accommodation ladder had been fitted, the officers, with the ready consideration of men of business, had slung an arm chair, that Sir Walter might have the option of walking up or being hoisted in. He preferred the chair as less fatiguing; and as we adjusted the apparatus, I observed that a new and stouter rope than usual had been rove for the occasion. This precaution may have been accidental, but it was quite in keeping with the incessant and eager desire manifested by every person on board to do honour to their illustrious guest.

After he had looked over the cabins intended for his accommodation, with which he expressed himself very much pleased, he came again on deck, and sat abaft the mizen-mast in conversation with his family till it was time to take leave, as a breeze had sprung up, and the ship was getting quickly under-weigh.

I shall not soon forget the great man's last look, while he held his friends successively by the hand, as he sat on the deck of the frigate, and wished us good-by, one after another, in a tone which shewed that he at least knew all hope was over!

During the week, when I was in attendance upon Sir Walter Scott at Portsmouth, I had frequent opportunities of speaking to him about his different novels, a subject upon which I was glad to find he had no objection to converse. I mentioned to him one day, that I considered myself very fortunate in having become the possessor of his original manuscript of the *Antiquary*. His observation was very remarkable. "I am glad of that, for it is the one I like best myself, and if you will let me have it for a few minutes, I shall

be glad to write a word or two upon it to that effect."

I told him it was in town, but that I should write off for it express, and hoped to receive it in time. Meanwhile, I asked him one or two questions about the Antiquary, and begged to know if it had cost much trouble in the composition.

"None whatever," was his reply; "I wrote it 'currente calamo' from beginning to end."

I asked him if he had ever actually witnessed or known of any scene resembling that of the baronet and his daughter going round the headland, and nearly being swept away by the tide coming in?

"O no!" he said, rather impatiently, I thought, as if the whole were obviously imaginative.

I next asked him if ever he had been present at such a scene as that in the hut of the fisherman, whose son is represented as lying dead in his coffin?

"No," he replied; "not exactly as there described; not exactly in all respects. I have, however, been in cottages upon similar occasions."

“ Is Rab Tull, sir, the parish clerk, a real name ; for, I observe at page 65 of the first volume of the MS. that this person’s name was originally written Rab Dozend ? ”

“ No,” he said, “ it is not a real name. Tull is a common name in that part of the country—Dundee.”

He laughed when he repeated the word Dozend, but said he could not recollect why he had changed it to Tull. I did not like to tease him with further questions.

By the mail early next morning I received the precious MS., and having taken my station in the drawing-room, an hour before the usual time of Sir Walter’s appearance, in order to secure the fulfilment of his promise, I waited impatiently till he came in. I was delighted to see him looking hearty and cheerful, as if he had passed a good night ; and as soon as he had taken his station at the writing-desk, I placed the autograph manuscript of the Antiquary before him, and reminded him of his offer to state in it the reasons of his preference of that novel.

He at once took his pen, and, in the course of somewhat less than an hour,

wrote the two pages of which an exact fac-simile will be found at the close of this volume. When he had finished, I said,

“ You would add great value to this writing, Sir Walter, if you would be so kind as to put your name to it.” He instantly wrote his signature.

“ The date also,” I added, “ would give it still further value.”

“ True,” he replied ; I had forgotten that.” And, resuming his pen, he wrote, “ Portsmouth, 27th October, 1831.”

The following is a copy, word for word, of this very curious document, which possesses a high degree of interest, not only from its being the very last thing he wrote on the shores of England, but from its containing a pleasing glimpse of that matchless vigour of thought, linked with betwitching playfulness of humour, which, in the opinion of many people, distinguish the Antiquary above all his other works.

“ MY DEAR CAPTAIN HALL,

“ As the wind seems determinately inflexible, I cannot employ my spare time better than in making a remark or two on

this novel, which, as you are kind enough to set an ideal value upon [it,] will perhaps be enhanced in that respect, by receiving any trifling explanations and particulars, [and by your learning] that among the numerous creatures of my imagination, the author has had a particular partiality for the Antiquary. It is one of the very few of my works of fiction which contains a portrait from life, and it is the likeness of a friend of my infancy, boyhood, and youth—a fact detected at the time by the acuteness of Mr. James Chalmers, solicitor-at-law in London. This gentleman, remarkable for the integrity of his conduct in business, and the modesty of his charges, had been an old friend and correspondent of my father's, in his more early and busy days; and he continued to take an interest in literary matters to the end of a life prolonged beyond the ordinary limits. He took, accordingly, some trouble to discover the author; and when he read the Antiquary, told my friend, William Erskine, that he was now perfectly satisfied that Walter Scott, of whom personally he knew really nothing, was the author of these

mysterious works of fiction ; for that the character of Jonathan Oldbuck of Monk-barns, was drawn from the late George Constable of Wallace Craigie of Dundee, who dined, when in Edinburgh, twice or thrice with my father every week, and used to speak of my sayings and doings as [those of] a clever boy. I was extremely surprised at this detection, for I thought I had taken the utmost care to destroy every trace of personal resemblance. I had no reason to suspect that any one in London could have recollected my friend, who had been long dead, and [who had] lived in strict retirement during the last years of his life. I took an opportunity to inquire after the general recollection which survived of my old friend, on an occasion when I chanced to be ‘ o’er the water,’ as we say. His house was in ruins, his property feued for some commercial [purpose,] and I found him described less as a humorist—which was his real character—than as a miser and a misanthrope, qualities which merely tinged his character. I owed him much for the kindness with which he treated me. I

remember particularly, when I resided for a time at Prestonpans with my aunt, Miss Janet Scott—one of those excellent persons who devote their ease and leisure to the care of some sick relation—George Constable chose to fix his residence [in the neighbourhood]—I have always thought from some sneaking kindness for my aunt, who, though not in the van of youth, had been a most beautiful woman. At least, we three walked together every day in the world, and the Antiquary was my familiar companion. He taught me to read and understand Shakspeare. He explained the field of battle of Prestonpans, of which he had witnessed the horrors from a safe distance. Many other books he read to us, and shewed a great deal of dramatic humour. I have mentioned [this] in the recent, or author's edition [of the *Waverley Novels*,] but less particularly than I would wish you to know.

“ The sort of preference which I gave, and still give, this work, is from its connexion with the early scenes of my life. — And here am I seeking health at the expense of travel, just as was the case

with me in my tenth year. Well ! I am not the first who has ended life as he began, and is bound to remember with gratitude those who have been willing to assist him in his voyage, whether in youth or age, amongst whom I must include old George Constable and yourself—

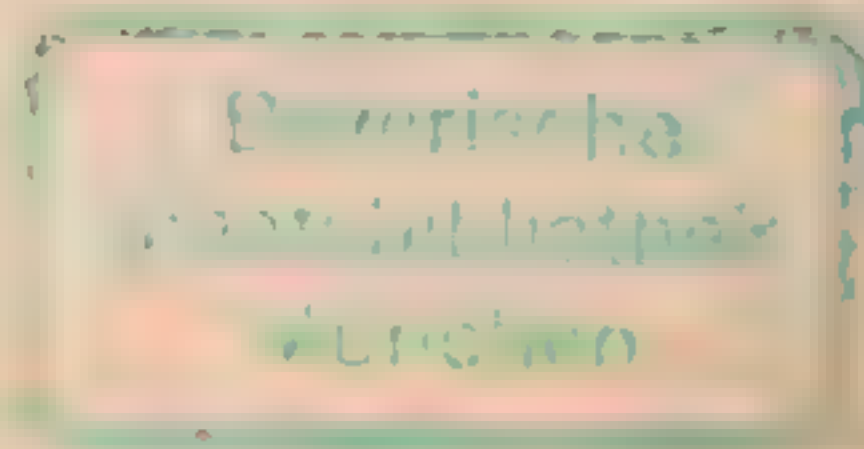
“WALTER SCOTT.”

“*Portsmouth, 27th October, 1831.*”

THE END.

LONDON:

J. MOYES, CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.



which he was for 1000
the 1000 qualifications which he
possessed for the American
people which I never took
myself to mind. I had not
seen the American people
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your true friend is
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At which I need
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Hall, Basil,

Fragments of voyages and travels

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